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THE SILENT PREACHER;

BEING

POSTHUMOUS SERMONS OF THE

REV. SAMUEL PENNY,

Late Rector of Emmanuel Church,

MANVILLE, R. I.

WITH A COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS,

DELIVERED IN ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, PROVIDENCE,

SEPTEMBER 21, 1853,

BY REV. HENRY WATERMAN.

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PREFACE.

It is known, we presume, to well nigh all, into whose hands this volume may fall, that its loved and gifted author was one of the victims of that Railway catastrophe, which occurred near Pawtucket, R. I., on the 12th day of August last. His personal and pastoral qualities had rendered him such a favorite both at the altar and the fireside, that when it pleased the MASTER to call him from our side, to "go up higher," the suggestion of a Commemorative Service found a prompt welcome on every hand. At a meeting of several of the Clergy, such a Service was appointed to be held in St. Stephen's Church, Providence, on the 21st of September; and, by Divine permission, was celebrated accordingly. The Address delivered on that occasion has been prefixed to this Volume with a reluctance which has been overruled, but not convinced, and which readers will appreciate better than hearers. The expressed wishes, however, of those whom *he* loved best in this world, were too sacred to be refused.

But besides the desire for some Act of Commemoration, there was another quite as general and spontaneous, and much more important, viz., a desire that some of our departed Brother's manuscripts might be published: that he, though dead, might still be a Preacher of righteousness to the living. That desire, under the favor of Providence, has been consummated. And the present Volume will be valued by many, not only as a memorial of the lamented and holy Dead, but as a happy specimen of intellectual power and culture, dedicated to the service of the Sanctuary.

The labor of preparing these Sermons for publication has been eminently a "labor of love." "No one of them gave me uneasiness but the last, for then I grieved that my work was done." It was a

constant source of regret, however, that they could not have had the benefit of the author's own revision. The reader should bear in mind that they are sent forth under all the disadvantages that usually attend posthumous publications. The most of these discourses were written in haste; and were intended for the *ear*, and not for the *eye*. They are entitled, therefore, to a generous consideration; for the editorial discretion to which they have been subjected, cannot but betray some marks of its insufficiency. But whatever rhetorical defects may be discovered in this Volume, one perusal will amply vindicate the following testimony, uttered at the "Commemoration;"—"Redemption through the blood of the Cross,—its necessity,—its freeness,—its glory,—its blessings,—its obligations,—these were his favorite themes."

We cannot close these prefatory remarks, without reminding the reader, that the sermons now before him, (the last two excepted,) were all carried into the pulpit, where the author kneeled down, and reverently bowed that meek countenance, both before and after the delivery of each one, imploring for them a heavenly benediction. And as the virtue of a fervent prayer often survives the person who prayed it, we cherish the pleasing thought that this Volume goes forth, already hallowed by the purest of devotions. And let me say to each reader,—If you loved the writer of these sermons,—if you love his memory still, and love the great object that lay so near his Pastoral heart, do not commence the perusal of these precious Remains, until you have commended them to that BLESSING, without which, both Pulpit and Press will speak in vain.

H. W.

PROVIDENCE, December, 1853.

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COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS.

ADDRESS.

"PRECIOUS in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," of every one of them from the least to the greatest. Not only are the SAVIOUR'S eye and heart *alway* taking note of the toils, and tears, and hopes, and prayers, of each living servant, as he strives to fulfil his duty; but His watchful and tender Providence embraces within it the hour when, and place where, and circumstances under which that servant's labours and trials shall be ended. CHRIST loved, and cared for, His first martyr St. Stephen, through all his career; but it is not a mere conceit which represents Him as "opening the windows, the curtains of heaven itself, to see Stephen die, and to show Himself to Stephen."

Precious before Him is the death of *all* His saints: and precious should it be with *us*. The memory of the dead should be cherished as a consecrated thing; for we regard it as a most wholesome and blessed thing. The "Communion of Saints" implies not only a fellowship of holy men one with another on *earth*, but a fellowship of holy men with kindred spirits withdrawn from earth. And children of grace, in every age, have found it a profitable, as well as a grateful, exercise to allow their minds to walk, as Baxter has it, in the streets of the City of God: to let it linger for an hour,

in a purer and more peaceful presence than this fallen world can know as yet. Such a habit may, indeed, degenerate into an abuse,—as we have painful witness in Rome's masses for the dead,—her invocations,—her purgatory,—her legends. But it must be remembered that almost all her corruptions are the abuse, or the vicious excess, of something originally and intrinsically good; and it becomes us to be careful lest the fear of what is wrong loosen our attachment to what is right; lest we abandon some primitive and scriptural basis, on account of some ugly superstructure that has been reared upon it by others: lest the superstition of the past recoil into the Sadduceeism of the present. And the custom which has prevailed throughout Christendom from olden time, of honouring the very dust of departed saints, and of calling to remembrance in a solemn act, their faith and love,—their crosses and comforts,—their ventures and victories,—how the Lord was glorified by what He did in them,—and *for* them, and *through* them,—is a custom recognised in the worship of our Church, and sanctioned by the purest instincts of our nature. It will do us good to think about the dead in CHRIST more than we do. It will serve to detach us from our affinities with the perishable and grovelling, and uplift our thoughts to holier and worthier themes. It will aid in rousing us to a deeper consciousness of an unseen world, and its untried realities, and so quicken our diligence in preparing to meet them. It will serve to kindle within us the resolve to emulate the graces, and the trophies of those who have gone before. If the heathen Themistocles was so strangely wrought upon, and changed by witnessing the fame that Miltiades had earned for himself, should not the heroic daring,—the ungrudged sacrifices,—the hard-won triumphs of Christian soldiers now fallen,—of fathers and brothers and sisters in CHRIST, stir us up to maintain the glory of our spiritual lineage,—to cultivate such a faith in God, and such a devotion to His service as shall not disgrace our

illustrious descent?* Beloved, who braved the terriffic assaults that were first made upon our holy Faith? *The dead in Christ.* Who first illustrated its power to elevate and purify man's polluted nature? *The dead.* To whom, under God, is the Church of CHRIST indebted for its present strength and growth and prospects in the world? *To the dead.* Who first laid on these shores the foundation of that branch of the Universal Church, which we own as our mother? Who first preached its holy Faith, and ministered its holy Sacraments in this city, and in this Diocese? *The dead in Christ.* Brethren, to whom are *you* indebted for much tender care, and many earnest intercessions in your behalf? for many patient, kind words of instruction, and warning, and entreaty, the silent influence of which remain with you to this day? Some of you must answer, *To the dead.* And now that they are gone, should we hold them at a distance from us, as if they were strangers? God forbid! Ought we not rather to be at some pains to maintain sentiments of love and veneration towards our brethren in CHRIST, who have been delivered from the burden of the flesh?

Brethren, this present world is with us too much; its mere utilities and materialities,—its feuds and rivalries,—its fashions and fascinations,—its pomps and profits, engross too much our appetites and energies; they are at this moment crowding out of many a busy soul those themes that take hold of the invisible and the everlasting. And it is good for us to seize and employ every means that will help us to "struggle out of the thick clay which besets us on every side." And I am sure that one such means is a contemplation of those, who, having overcome the world, have now done with it

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* "We are Eleazer's children, of whose fortitude and greatness, you have had sufficient proof. The father has distinguished himself first; his sons will not degenerate. The brave Priest is dead with honor; his family will follow him."—*Language of the Maccabees to Antiochus, just before their execution.*

forever. Some of the mightiest and most lasting impressions on character, are insensibly communicated by breathing a pure moral atmosphere,—by mixing in holy society. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise."

But we may honor the memories of departed saints, and think of them, and call to mind their ways and works, each one for himself in the privacy of his home. The service, however, in which we are now employed, is termed a COMMEMORATION; a word which implies that it is a public act, in which numbers jointly engage. It is an assembling of kindred, and brethren, and friends, to celebrate, one with another,—*com*memorate,—the holy life and death of brethren removed to a holier life, where no death can follow. *Closet* thoughts and remembrances of the dead have often exerted, without doubt, an excellent influence; but a public solemnity, where eye meets eye, and voice meets voice, and heart meets heart, and tear meets tear, seems adapted to produce deeper and more lasting impressions. Hence one reason of this morning's solemnity. An awful Providence hath snatched from our midst a dearly beloved brother in the Lord, the charming beauty and mellowness of whose character had won him a sure place in well-nigh every heart, and whose intellectual gifts and refinement had gained for him the admiration of all in this afflicted Diocese, both clergy and laity, who can appreciate consecrated talent. He so excelled us in the qualities of both heart and head, and hath left behind him a name so fragrant, that it has seemed proper for us to pause, and step aside to some holy ground for the purposes of recollection and praise and prayer, and for assisting each other to draw some spiritual profit or consolation from what God has been doing at our side. We do not meet here to glorify a departed soul, but to glorify God in him; not to indulge the language of a random eulogy, but to learn from his example, and from his end, more perfectly than we have yet done, some great lessons of life.

Ever since our brother PENNY's decease, it has been to me a source of keen regret, and of wonder too, that I never obtained from him a more minute and connected account of the years that preceded his entrance upon the pastoral work here in Rhode Island. Of his youth and early manhood, I have to confess but a fragmentary acquaintance. He was born in the city of New York, in the year of grace, 1808. He manifested through his younger days, more or less of sensibility to the great truths and motives of the Gospel. His parents were devout members of the Presbyterian Church; and he enjoyed the unspeakable advantage of those quiet, but powerful influences, that cluster within, and around, a Christian household. He was the child of many a pious counsel,—of many an earnest prayer;—of counsels and prayers that borrowed strength from a pure parental example. To those domestic influences, in connection with the stated catechetical exercises which his Pastor held every week for the benefit of the lambs of the flock, he was, without doubt, largely indebted, under God, for that exceeding purity of character, and of principle, which adorned his riper years, and which now renders his memory so dear. In the tenderness of childhood, he was taught and trained in the ways of religion; and he carried with him through life a distinct recollection of his fondness, when a boy, for the society of his mother: her presence and words had higher charms for him than all those sports and fellowships that usually engross our juvenile affections. And as he lived long enough to appreciate the blessing of a parent's guidance and prayers, so one, at least, of his parents lived long enough to feel rewarded a thousand times over, for all his efforts and anxieties in behalf of his youngest son, —his darling,—the Benjamin of his old age,—him whom we commemorate to-day. That father and son were a great comfort to each other: they were "lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths, they were" scarcely "divided." The venerable sire, of more than

four-score years, slept peacefully in CHRIST on the 24th July last, at his residence in Brooklyn: it was our brother's privilege to minister at his bed-side, and to receive his parting words. After performing the last offices of filial and fraternal duty, he returned to Rhode Island, and in less than three days after he reached his parish, he joined his father in Paradise.

Mr. Penny was favored with the best opportunities of a liberal education that his native city afforded, and those who enjoyed his society much, will need no assurance that those opportunities were well used. He became a member of Columbia College, and graduated at that institution in 1827. He then chose the Law as the profession for which he would prepare himself, and then pursue as the business of his life. To this end, he entered himself a student in the Law School, over which the late Judge Gould was then presiding with so much popularity and success at Litchfield. How long he remained there, I am unable to state; but while there, he applied himself so intensely to his studies, that his health broke down under the exhausting tasks which he imposed upon himself. Then and there, was laid the foundation of those physical ailments and infirmities, which thenceforward entailed upon our brother so many days and nights of weariness and pain; and which so often disabled him from fulfilling the duties which his heart loved. The legal studies, into which he had thrown himself with such ardor and industry, were necessarily suspended: and in the hope of repairing his shattered nerves, and recruiting his wasted energies, he became a traveller on the great deep: twice visited the West Indies: but the great object of his travels was never but partially gained. He could never win back the blessing of that health which excessive devotion to study had forfeited. But there is reason to believe that his lost blessing became, through Divine mercy, the channel of a richer blessing than he ever possessed before,—a blessing which he has carried with him into eternity. He

was led to realize more deeply than ever before, that his *soul* needed a physician more than his body: and he sought more earnestly than ever, to have that soul washed and healed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.

The time when he first openly declared himself on the Lord's side, I do not recollect ever to have heard him mention, and have been unable to ascertain. We feel warranted, however, in supposing, that there was one individual not yet alluded to, whose acquaintance and intercourse with Mr. Penny had something to do with our dear brother's confession of CHRIST before men, and with his final determination to retire from the communion in which he had been reared,—to identify himself with our Church, and to offer himself a candidate for her ministry. I refer to the late EDWARD BRISTED EASTBURN, a brother of the present Bishop of Massachusetts. He was a young man of excellent talents and attainments; distinguished by great modesty, gentleness and good sense, and by the great strength and purity of his religious principles. He had almost completed his theological studies, preparatory to his admission to holy orders, when death arrested him in 1830; the young soldier received his discharge almost in the act of girding on his armor. Mr. Penny and himself resided in each other's immediate neighborhood: they were classmates in college, and were very intimately associated together. It would not be strange if our brother derived a growing impression of the importance of a religion, and the advantages of a Church, which his gifted and dear friend adorned and recommended so well.

Previously, however, to his having made any change in his ecclesiastical relations, he had determined to devote himself to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. He connected himself with the Lane Theological Seminary, near Cincinnati, intending to prosecute there the studies appropriate to a candidate for the Sacred Office. It was during his residence there, that he serious-

ly examined for himself the distinctive claims and principles of the Protestant Episcopal Church. The conscientiousness which marked his whole career, would not allow him to sunder the religious ties which had bound him elsewhere, for any consideration of mere taste or preference, or for any *other* consideration that did not involve *principle*. He satisfied himself that the threefold constitution of the Ministry was of Apostolic origin, and of binding authority. Whatever circumstances may have inclined him at first to regard our Church with favor, his union with her was the result of clear and deliberate conviction. And his subsequent course evinced that he was not only *in* her, but *of* her: he appreciated her privileges and her position, as an undoubted and traceable branch of the original Vine. Every year's experience and comparison did but strengthen his attachment.

But while the result of his investigations at the Lane Seminary was such as we have mentioned, it could not but cost his sensitive nature a struggle to *act* on the convictions to which he had been brought, and to separate himself from a fold, which the dearest of his kindred loved as their spiritual home, and which they would be sorry to have him leave. Unexpectedly to himself, however, the weight of that trial was somewhat relieved, in a way that our brother felt to be quite providential, but which does not call for public mention. He returned to New York, and became a member of the General Theological Seminary of our Church in the year 1835, —and graduated in 1838. He was admitted to the Diaconate about the first of July in that year; in the course of the ensuing Autumn, a good Providence turned his steps hitherward. He first officiated at Portsmouth, and then at Jamestown, but did not remain long at either parish. About the first of January, 1840, he assumed the Rectorship of Emanuel Church, Manville, which was the scene of nearly all his subsequent labours. In 1845, he resigned the parish, and accompanied Bishop South-

gate to Constantinople, as a Missionary laborer in that most interesting field. But the climate there, operating on a frame impaired by the fatigues of land-travel, disabled him almost immediately for any active exertion, and he remained there but a few weeks. In the course of the following year, his old flock welcomed him back again to their midst: his pastoral labors, however, were much interrupted by his infirmities of body, and in the Spring of 1852, he thought it a duty to vacate the Rectorship, in the double hope of recruiting himself by rest, and of securing to the parish a more vigorous superintendence than he was competent to supply himself. After an absence of a year, he accepted a proposal to officiate for the same parish during the present summer: he preached there on the second and third Sundays in July, and no more. On the afternoon of the last mentioned Sunday, being the 17th day of July, he preached for the last time,—on *the characteristics of a good soldier of* CHRIST. That same week, he was summoned to his father's bed-side, in Brooklyn, and was absent about three weeks,—a portion of his time, after his father's burial, being occupied in the composition of two Sermons, which he was destined not to utter himself; both of them worthy of his reputation, as the most finished sermonizer in the Diocese, and one of them, on "the still small voice," worthy of *any* man's reputation, either here or elsewhere.

The afternoon of Tuesday, August 9, found him once more in the midst of his flock: on the fatal morning of Friday, the 12th, he set out on a brief visit to Pawtucket, intending to return at noon; he little thought that the car on which he embarked, was a triumphal chariot to carry home his pilgrim soul.

Thirteen years of affectionate, confidential intercourse with our truly reverend brother, now taken from us, may expose me, brethren, to the danger of exaggerated praise; but I speak nothing to which scores before me will not respond most sincerely, when I say that his

Christian character was one of singular purity and blamelessness. When the stunning report of his death passed from one to another of those who had known him, the first thought on each heart,—the first ejaculation that sprang to the lips, was, "How well prepared was he to go, unwarned!" The feeling was not simply, that there was good hope of his being at rest, but it was this:—"If ever one gave evidence of preparation for death, it was he." In whatever circle he moved, he left behind him the impression of a meek, unostentatious, uniform, reliable piety. Nor can we wonder thereat; for he exhibited in his deportment not only the *substance* of godliness, but its *ornaments*. And although substance is more important than ornament, yet when the ornamental serves to recommend the substance, and lends it new attractiveness and power, the ornamental becomes *useful*. I cannot help thinking that here is one reason why our brother's Christian character was so impressive:—his personal religion not only had a reality,—it was a jewelled and shining reality. Our Bibles and our observation teach us to make such a distinction. The Bible speaks not only of *holiness*, but of "the *beauty* of holiness;" not only of believing the doctrine, but of *adorning* it; of cultivating not only the essential elements of godliness, but "whatever is lovely and of good report;" all which language implies that an example may be made not only instructive by its faithfulness, but *persuasive* by its *loveliness*. And herein did our brother excel. Humility, gentleness, charity, and other kindred graces threw a kind of halo around him, which was the more noticeable, because along with the amiableness *and* modesty of his nature, we knew him to possess a vigorous and disciplined understanding, that qualified him to sit in the company of scholars and philosophers. Mere gentleness, or any similar quality, unattended with some features of mind or character that challenge attention or respect, carries but little weight; sometimes, we fear, barely escapes contempt; but, in union

with strong character and large gifts, it can hardly fail of producing a marked effect. In the instance before us, a finely proportioned manhood, both of head and heart, was sweetly set off by a purity of spiritual complexion,—by a "*beauty* of holiness," that seemed like a second nature: so much so, that I was not surprised at the remark of a clerical brother, that he found himself regarding our departed friend as having been *always* so saintly and symmetrical in his Christian character,—as having had no *beginning* in such a character. Blessed services will these be to-day, if they shall stimulate us in the endeavor to reproduce and cherish that character among ourselves,—its charming combination of the solid and the ornamental. George Herbert declares that the Country Parson's Library is a holy life: there are not many who possessed a library so perfect as his, whom we now commemorate. And the satisfaction, with which his library was everywhere read, is measurably,—may I not say *largely*,—due to the fact that its volumes were not only so truthful and instructive in their contents, but so handsomely bound, and so tastefully arranged.

My Christian friends,—our dear brother's proficiency in holiness was not an accident; neither was it the result of a special decree in his favor; but we may, I think, safely regard it as the result, in a great part, of sanctified trials and sufferings. For nearly a quarter of a century, there was mixed in the cup of his experience, a great deal of the bitter. There have been hours in his life, when the burden of suffering was so heavy, that nothing but the power of religious principle prevented him, as he himself has told me, from seeking relief in a self-made grave. All, indeed, are born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward; suffering being more universal than sin: for God had one Son without sin, but never one without suffering; and that sinless One, (mysterious truth!) was "made perfect through suffering." And it has seemed to us that our dear brother was so fruitful

in faith, and patience, and love, because his vine had been so pruned and purged. The ills and aches of a constitution shattered beyond repair, felt for successive years, was no light burden; and then there was the heavier one, that his physical infirmities interrupted so much those pastoral functions, in which his heart so much delighted, and for which his well-stored mind so amply fitted him. I never discovered in him any ambition for a large or conspicuous field of labor; but to be disabled from working *anywhere*,—from doing *anything*,—that was a grief and a trial. We just now alluded to the fact that he undertook, eight years since, to serve his Master in missionary labors abroad. His missionary resolution was not the good impulse of a moment: it had been secretly fermenting in his mind for years. It was the resolution not simply of a *conscientious* man, but of a conscientious man, who thought and prayed, before he resolved. In fact, he had previously offered himself for our China Mission, and would have been gladly accepted, but for the conviction that his delicate health would soon be prostrated in such a climate as that of China. No such danger was apprehended from a residence in Turkey, and he went there with a missionary's heart and hope. But he was not permitted to accomplish, or even scarcely to *attempt*, anything, while there. And his departure followed close upon his arrival. I will not now linger over the depth of our brother's disappointment. He encountered a dark Providence,—to *him*, however, dark now no longer. It was one of many Providences, in which he was being disciplined and trained up into the strength and stature of a *hero* in CHRIST. And no man ever becomes such, until he has suffered *with* CHRIST. It is a great thing to go forth willingly and labor for CHRIST; but it is *greater*, to be still at one's post, and wait, while the heart is longing to do something.

——"Who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve him best."

It is the passive virtues that test a soldier's fidelity; and they are learned in the school of adversity. In that school, our departed brother was no stranger. It reminds us of what is to many a perplexing fact, that they, who in *human judgment*, least need the discipline of a rod or of a furnace, are made to experience it the most. What a saintly man was he whom we have lost; and yet how much he suffered through all his ministry!* It is a consolation that sorrow is the minister no less of mercy, than of severity; that "the Church," as Leighton writes, "is God's work-house, where His jewels are polishing for His palace; and those whom He especially esteems, and means to make most resplendent, He hath oftenest His tools upon." Even a heathen philosopher could rise up to a similar sentiment,—that the spectacle of a brave man on earth, superior to his sufferings, was a pleasure to Jupiter himself. And as I look back upon the career of our departed fellow-soldier, with that complicated cross upon his shoulders, I am reminded that adversity is the post of honor,—the privilege of choicer spirits,—the patent of a spiritual nobility. And as *he* looks back upon his earthly probation, can we doubt that every recollection of tears and pangs, kindles a new song of praise to Him, whom trials had made so precious. And I can almost imagine him as thinking it an imperfection in his bliss, that he has no more opportunity to "suffer with CHRIST."† But we rejoice for him, that "after life's fitful fever, he sleeps" so "well." We commemorate here, and now, the last and best of all his birth-days. As we think of his cleansed and perfected

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* "Sometimes God sees it good for us, not to sip of the cup of affliction, but to make a diet-drink of it, for constant and common use. If He allow us no other liquor for many years, we must take it off cheerfully, and know that it is but the measure of our betters."—*Bishop Hall.*

† "Truly, if it were possible to fear any defect of joy in heaven, all that could fall into my fear, would be but this, that in heaven I can no longer express my love by suffering for my God, for my Saviour. A greater joy cannot enter into my heart than this,—to suffer for Him that suffered for me."—*Donne.*

nature, let us remember, for our own admonition, the refining process through which it became what it is. "Blessed is the man," and blessed is the minister that "endureth temptation;" for when he is *tried*, and not till then, "he shall receive the crown of life."

And that word "minister," Brethren, reminds us that the loss, which has bowed so many hearts in grief, is not simply the loss of a good man's prayers, and counsels, and example: we have lost the gifted and faithful ambassador of God to sinful man. We could not but weep over such bereavement, even though others were coming freely forward to fill up every chasm in the ranks; but in connection with the distressing fact, (which has not, I am afraid, alarmed us as it should,) that the number of candidates for Holy Orders has decreased among us,—our brother's removal creates a deeper sadness. With what clearness and strength, he could unfold and recommend the great truths of the Gospel,—what a welcome his appearance in any of our pulpits did ever meet, the most of you know full well. And if some of those sermons which he addressed to the public ear, shall ever find their way to the public *eye*, others will see and confess that the voice which has just now been hushed, was the voice of no ordinary prophet.

As he loved to feed his own soul with the old, the plain, the practical, in religion, so with the old, the plain, the practical, he preferred to feed the souls of others. He made them the staple of his preaching. Redemption through the blood of the Cross,—its necessity,—its freeness,—its glory,—its blessings,—its obligations,—these were his favorite themes. He cultivated that style of preaching, which "lays low the sinner, exalts the Saviour, and promotes true holiness." The terrible criticism of the late Dr. Mason on a sermon he once heard,—that "it needed to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus CHRIST, before it could be entitled to the name of a Christian sermon," could never

be levelled at the discourses of the Rev. SAMUEL PENNY. All that he uttered in his Master's name was baptized before it reached his lips; and although he could not command the graces of the orator, he preached with a sincerity, gentleness, and unction, which imparted a flavor to all his ministrations, and for which oratorical graces would have been but a poor exchange. And when we remember that everything which he proclaimed with his mouth was illustrated and confirmed by the nobler eloquence of his own consistent life, the extinction of such a light we cannot but deplore as a bitter calamity; and yet we may not forget to be thankful that such a light was permitted to shine so long, and to shine *here*, in our Rhode Island Church; that we have had for years the blessing and comfort of its mild radiance; and that it is now extinguished only to be relighted, and shine in greater splendor.

We shall not dwell on the circumstances under which our dear brother's spirit passed away from earth. It would only agitate the mind; the purpose of these solemnities is rather to soothe and to heal. He left his home for an absence of a few hours only, and was cut down, with scarcely a moment's warning that danger was near, and, as we suppose, without a moment's suffering. He suffered in life, but not in death; and his departure seemed not so much a death as a translation.* He has been known to express the wish that if it were God's will, his entrance into eternity might not be sudden. And in one of the two sermons which he wrote, but did not live to preach, he has these remarks on the feelings of Daniel when about to be thrown into the lion's den. "*It could not but have somewhat shaken his firmness to be called to face death in so terrible a form,—to be torn violently from existence, and so ab-*

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* "To pass from midnight to noon on the sudden; to be decrepid one minute, and all spirit and activity the next, must be a desirable change. To call this dying is an abuse of language."—*Jeremy Collier.*

*ruptly summoned into the presence of his Judge. Eternity is too solemn a thought; to approach it gradually, with an opportunity for recollection, and the confirmation of our hope, is ordinarily enough for mortal strength; but to pass thus rapidly from the scenes and responsibilities of life, to the occupations of the eternal world, must demand a more than usual supply of Divine support and comfort."**

The wishes of God's saints, touching the manner of their departure, have been sometimes fulfilled. Leighton desired that he might die at *an inn*, as being a fitting place for a *pilgrim's* sleep. And his death *did* take place at an inn. It was Bishop Jewell's wish that his last summons might find him preaching the Word; and it was literally fulfilled. But our brother's preference of a gradual, premonished struggle with the last enemy, or what Hooker terms "a leisurable departure," was denied him, and, no doubt, kindly and wisely, denied him. To us who loved him, it would have been a privilege, as he crossed the dark river, to hear from him the words of Hopeful, "I feel the bottom, and it is good;" to be certified that the grace which had proved so all-sufficient to the river's brink, was equally sufficient for the passage across. The believer's parting testimony is precious; but precious for *our* sake, not his. Though in the present instance, he, whose memory we now honor, had borne such a *living* testimony to his Master's name and faith, that our hope in his death could not be a surer, or happier, thing than it is. His attachment to things seen and temporal had been growing looser and looser. Only the day before the fatal one,

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* "It is very hard for the best man, in a sudden extremity of death, to satisfy himself in apprehending his stay, and reposing his heart upon it; for the soul is so oppressed with sudden terror, that it cannot well command itself, till it have digested an evil. It were miserable for the best Christian, if all his former prayers and meditations did not serve to aid him in his last straits, and meet together in the centre of his extremity,—yielding, though not sensible relief, yet secret benefit to the soul; whereas, the worldly man, in this case, having not laid up for this hour, hath no comfort from God, or from others, or from himself."—*Bishop Hall.*

he was heard to say, that he hardly had a wish to stay on earth, except on account of others. And if it be true, that "there is nothing so near immortality as to die daily;" that "continual mortification is immortality;" then our dear brother began to be immortal before he ceased to be mortal. Under such circumstances, of what little consequence is the manner of his removal.

Not long before his removal, he read, or began to read, the recent work of Maurice on "the Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament." There is one passage in it which he marked with his pencil, as having arrested his attention. The fact of its being so marked, no less than its own truthful eloquence, induces us to repeat it here.

"We must turn elsewhere than to the books of the Old and New Testament for death-bed scenes. One beautiful record of the first deacon of the church, who prayed for his countrymen, 'Lord! lay not this sin to their charge,' is all that we have of martyrology in the Bible. Its warriors fight the good fight. We know that in some battle or other, they finish their course. Where, or how,—under what circumstances of humiliation or triumph, we are not told. If it pleased God that their lamp should shine out brightly at the last, that was well, for He was glorified in their strength. If it pleased Him that the light should go out in its socket, that was well too, for He was glorified in their weakness. And never be it forgotten, that at the death which redeemed all other deaths, and made them blessed, there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour, and that a cry came out of that darkness, 'My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?'"

Brethren, if we find ourselves sometimes wishing that our brother's departure had been less sudden than it was, let us remember that the shock occasioned by *such* a death of *such* a man, may arouse to reflection, when a thousand removals in the ordinary course of mortality would not; and that the distress of seeing such fine ca-

pacities dismantled in the twinkling of an eye, and in their very prime, is not so great as it would be, if we had beheld them struck with utter imbecility. What a spectacle must have been the sprightly genius of Warburton, crawling, as it were, in idiocy. When

> "From Marlboro's eyes the tears of dotage flow,
> And Swift expires a driveller and a show,"

are we not made to feel that a *living* death is one of the hardest trials of human affection? And let us remember, too, that as the death of every saint is precious before God, such a death can never be, in truth, an *accident;* that if he takes note of a *sparrow's* fall, He cannot overlook the fall of a beloved child: and that He can make man's recklessness, as well as wrath, to praise Him.

There is still one other lesson which our brother's sudden end was, doubtless, intended to impress on all our hearts, viz., that issues of eternal moment are sometimes suspended on what man would term trifles. If that ill-fated train, in which death overtook our brother, had had at its disposal only one more minute of time, an awful calamity would have been avoided. But what an "*if*" was there! For the lack of one minute, the destinies of fifteen or more, accountable beings were irreversibly settled for an endless hereafter; and a hundred hearts, here and there, almost prostrated with anguish. And so it is everywhere. A man is walking on a precipice; he steps only one inch too far to the right, and in the twinkling of an eye, *he is gone.* A house is in flames; one man escapes; another only steps back a moment to seize some valuable papers, and before he reaches the door, the roof has fallen and crushed him. The trifle of ten seconds was a matter of life and death to him. So it may be with some of *you:* a trifling delay, a trifling excuse, a trifling neglect of duty may contain the seeds of eternity. If death should overtake you ten minutes before you are ready, the trifling differ-

ence of ten minutes would shut forever your door of hope; and all the angels of heaven cannot open you another! Does not a voice come from our brother's grave, bidding us all remember the uncertainties of life, and do with our might whatever our hands find to do, there being "no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave?" If he could speak to us himself, I think he would remind some of us, that while "the last enemy" may advance upon us suddenly, we cannot expect to *prepare* suddenly for the encounter. We cannot expect to collect the necessary armor, adjust it to our limbs, and learn to use it successfully, *in a passing moment.* Real preparation for death must be regarded as the fruit of time, of penitence, and prayer, and discipline; not a thing to be dispatched by a sigh, and a tear, and an ejaculation for mercy, when the breath is almost gone. If our departed brother had delayed the business of his preparation for eternity, (as such numbers are now doing,) trusting to the chances of a sick chamber, where would have been that joyful, triumphant hope, with which we think of him to-day? Where would have been his soul to-day? As it is, he was ready, for he had begun his preparation long before. And all that preparation of his did not *hasten* his death at all,—only *sweetened* it; and if you will imitate his early and steadfast devotion to the Lord Jesus, you will die *better*, but not *sooner*, for it. And it was in the hope of stirring us all up *to* such an imitation, that the services of this morning originated. Meditating on the good examples of brethren who have gone before, hath often proved the mother of new and noble attainments in piety. If we will go up in imagination oftener than we do, and converse with the faithful departed, it will aid the supremacy of spirit over flesh;—the majesty of the future over the littleness of the present. I cannot help thinking there is some truth in the line, that "they who cease to *think* of saints, will soon cease to *live* as saints."

It has been remarked of the mariner, that, on a voyage, he pledges the health of "*friends astern*," until half way to his destination, and then, "*friends ahead*." We are all of us, brethren, embarked on the voyage of life; and whether we have passed over more or less than half of it, it becomes us to cherish the memory of "friends ahead," who have "passed the waves of this troublesome world," and now tread the immortal shores. And who has not friends ahead? Who counts not a loved one in that cloud of witnesses above us? Those witnesses, now an innumerable host, the Apostle represents as gazing down upon us, to see after what manner we are discharging the hallowed offices they have bequeathed to us. Let the thought of such spectators overlooking us, urge us to fresh exertions in "the race that is set before us." Beloved, they are waiting for us. When the "great multitude" shall be gathered at last, God forbid that any of us should be missing. True, if we are not there, our absence will not be felt: "the loss will be ours; but, O! what a loss!"

Help us, O Lord! "help Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood. Make them to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting."

Sermon 1.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

A MISSIONARY SERMON.

II Cor. v. 14.—*For the love of Christ constraineth us.*

The Apostle here assigns a reason for his activity in the cause of his Master. In one brief line, he comprises the whole philosophy of our religion,—a philosophy profound, yet simple, challenging, by its conclusions, the assent of our understanding, and the sanction of our warmest affections. With the simplicity of a child,—but a child of God,—one who had been taught in the school of Jesus Christ, he points his readers to the Cross. The sufferings of the Saviour must have been fresh in the memories of those to whom he wrote. And as he recalled to their minds that hour of bitter anguish, when Christ endured His last agony, and gave His spotless soul a ransom for *his* and their own, could he fail to find in their *hearts* at least, a sufficient vindication of his devotedness and zeal? How comprehensive and omnipotent is the Apostle's argument! *Jesus died* that *I might live:* all the blessings of this present life, and

all my hopes of the future, are the purchase of His blood; pronounce me fool, madman, or what you will, you cannot obliterate *this solemn fact,—Jesus died* that *I might live.* A child can understand this argument, and the wisest sage cannot suggest a better, for the love which should burn in every Christian's bosom.

And what better or more inspiring topic can possibly be presented than that supplied by the text,—*the constraining love of* CHRIST? You may not, my hearers, be in the same situation with St. Paul. You may not be surrounded by enemies who are mocking your exertions; you may be cheered by the voice of christian friendship and sympathy. But does it follow that the Apostle's argument has now become superfluous? Because there is much around you to urge on your labor of love, is it therefore unnecessary to speak to you of the love of Jesus? Do your own hearts need no stimulus to exertion? Is the cause which you have espoused, appreciated in all its fulness and sacredness? Is the *constraining love of* CHRIST the ruling, ever-acting spring of all that you undertake? In fine,—may it not be necessary for you to plead the cause of religion and of a suffering Saviour, *to your own hearts,* until every emotion shall be quickened into love, and every energy enlisted in the cause of CHRIST?

It is in the hope of contributing to such a result, that we have chosen our present theme.

The text may be viewed in a two-fold aspect. By "the love of Christ" we may understand, either His love to us, or our love to Him. We shall treat it in both these aspects, but more particularly with reference to the former.

And first, the Christian should be animated by a love similar to that of the Saviour. What that love was, we shall now proceed to inquire.

1. It was a love *for the soul.*

In all that Christ said or did, and in all that He suffered, we behold Him aiming uniformly and steadily at one great object,—the salvation of the soul. To the accomplishment of that object, we find him subordinating every other consideration. The whole world, with its mines of wealth,—its intoxicating pleasures, its sounding titles,—was lighter than the small dust of the balance, when weighed against the importance of *one* undying soul. Follow the Saviour through His weary pilgrimage. See Him with His little band of devoted followers, traversing the plains of Palestine, houseless,—homeless,—a stranger in the world which He came to redeem,—almost entirely cut off from human sympathy,—by day, ceaselessly occupied in his works of mercy, and at night, when every other head was pillowed in slumber, pouring forth His fervent supplications to His Father. Go with Him to the garden of Gethsemane: follow Him on to the last scene of His matchless sufferings: remember that all those sufferings were endured *to save the soul from death,* and you can, in some degree, measure the *love* of Jesus for the *soul.* O, it was a love which engaged every thought. Though by no means regardless of our interests in other respects, He suffered nothing to interfere with the progress of His one great design, until He could say, "It is finished!"

And such, Brethren, is the love that should animate every follower of Jesus. There must be a positive love for the souls of those around you: a love which will

stimulate you to devote your energies and means towards effecting their salvation. When you think that "the soul is immortal,—that it is not only capable of, but *destined* to, endless expansion and growth,—that through the ages of eternity, it will be forever rising higher and higher amid the glories of heaven, or sinking deeper and deeper, in the unspeakable bereavements and woes of hell,"—when you remember that CHRIST has so loved it, as to give His own life for its ransom, and that all heaven is filled with joy, when one such soul is added to its happy throng,—can it be that you have the spirit of Jesus, if the *interests* of the soul be not the subject of your anxious thought and effort? What a blessed privilege is it to labor in such a work! Think of it, my hearer, until you have grasped it in all its grandeur! When we succeed in obtaining a measurable apprehension of what is implied in the soul's salvation, we are apt to shrink aside in conscious impotency, and leave the work for the Almighty to accomplish. But it is a thought which should awaken all our gratitude, that God has indeed committed this treasure to earthern vessels,—not merely by appointing the Ministry of reconciliation, but by clothing every single believer, however obscure or unnoticed, with the power of saving souls from death. And if the members of the church, in their *individual*, as well as associated, capacity, would remember that they may be the instruments of awakening the joy of heaven over repenting sinners, we should soon see her arising and shining, as with the glory of the Lord, and sinners flocking to her enclosures as doves to their windows. May we not say, that it is because this conviction is so faintly realized, that the

efforts of Christians are so few and feeble? Suppose, my hearer, that your vision, in respect of spiritual things, were so invigorated and purified, that you could see, in all its undisguised reality, the multitudes of the ungodly, thronging their way to perdition. Suppose that you knew that by any efforts of yours, you could snatch but one of them as a brand from the burning, would you give sleep to your eyes, till you had made that one a monument of saving mercy? And does it need any such revelation as this to carry to your mind the conviction of its truth? Is it not *just as true*, as if you *saw* it? Yes, believer, unimportant, and even worthless, as your exertions may, at times, seem to yourself, there is absolutely nothing that you may do in the name, and for the sake of CHRIST, and the souls for which He died, that will not tell upon their everlasting destinies. And though you may not see the results of your labors here, and may secretly weep over apparently unavailing toil, yet, as God is true, you *will* see it, when CHRIST shall be revealed in His glory. O what a moment of entrancing bliss! as you stand in the presence of your Redeemer, and are assured of your own salvation, to have one and another of CHRIST'S ransomed ones rising up by your side, and calling you blessed! Next to the joy of your own salvation, will it not greatly add to the bliss of heaven to mingle your triumphant sympathies with the souls that have been saved by your means? Look forward, then, to such a moment as that. Gather around you, by an energetic faith, the realities of the eternal world. Calculate the worth of the soul; think of its priceless value. Think of it, until your *love* for

the soul shall resemble in intensity the love of CHRIST, and rouse you to a labor like His.

2. The love of CHRIST was an *universal* love.

He shed His blood that all who will repent and believe in Him might receive forgiveness of sins, and be made partakers of Everlasting Life. His was a love that extended its regards to every individual of the human family. He thought not merely of the bigoted and self-righteous Jew, but of the ignorant and idolatrous Gentile. He poured out His life, a sacrifice unto God, that there might be "a way of access unto the Father" for all who will come. The offer of salvation is consequently made to all who have *souls* to be *saved* or *lost*. None will be rejected of CHRIST, but those who reject *Him*. Hence, the comprehensiveness of His original commission to the Apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." A love similar to that of the Saviour's animated *their* bosoms. They *went* into "all the world," and proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation to the prince upon his throne,—the judge upon his tribunal,—the prisoner in his dungeon, and the slave in his chains. The utmost bounds of the world formed the only limits to their holy benevolence.

My Brethren, such love as this was never intended to be peculiarly apostolic. It is the type of every Christian's love. *Yours* must be as broad as the Saviour's; not *partial*, but *universal*. Whilst those immediately around you are not to be neglected, cast a frequent eye over the "waste howling wilderness" where Satan seems to reign triumphant,—where the besotted victim of idolatry seeks in vain to still the voice of conscience by the most painful and cruel rites. Let your ear be open to the soul-

subduing cry, "Come over and help us," which so often issues from those "habitations of cruelty." And whilst you press to your heart the Bible, and exult in its promises, forget not the benighted heathen, with souls as precious as your own. Think of such an one, moaning under a sense of guilt, but knowing nothing of the Redemption which is by Christ Jesus:—approaching the grave and eternity, but with not one promise from the Book of God to shed its light upon his path.

Now I know, as a general rule, that every Christian must have his own particular sphere of labor. And we are not to suffer one soul to perish at our door, because multitudes in other lands are destitute of the Gospel. But because we cannot do *everything*, shall we do *nothing?* To refer, for example, to that which every one may do, who is constrained by "the love of CHRIST,"—*how often*, my Christian hearer, do you remember the heathen in your *prayers?* How often do you make their condition the subject of your devout reflections? Do you long for the spread of the Gospel? Do you earnestly look forward to the period, when every idol shall be thrown to the moles and to the bats, and God alone shall be exalted in His holiness?

But there is no one who cannot do more than this. Surely, something can be saved from self-indulgence, and thrown into the "treasury of the Lord." And He, who condescendingly approved, and, no doubt, extensively blessed, the widow's mite, will regard the offering, and will guide it to the production of results, which eternity alone may unfold, and which eternity alone can measure.

3. The love of CHRIST was prompt and *unsolicited.*

He waited not for the cry for mercy to issue from our guilty race. No interceding voice was heard amid the hosts of heaven, entreating Him to appear for our deliverance. When man was ruined, no created wisdom could suggest a plan of recovery. Nothing but Eternal Love could prompt the *thought* of mercy. Had the Saviour waited for our supplications,—had He *hesitated* to stand "between the living and the dead," the weight of God's just wrath must have pressed us into eternal perdition. But no! His love was unasked,—unsolicited; and though He had to redeem not simply the wretched and the helpless, but those whose hearts were at *enmity* with Him, yet *that* was no obstacle to His compassion. His love overleapt everything, and the Beloved of the Father hastened as a conqueror to the spoil, crying, "Spare! for I will be their ransom!" Herein is love, not that we loved CHRIST, but that He loved *us*. O, Brethren, we should never forget that in the work of our salvation, the Saviour made the first advances. He lingered not until our case should become less desperate,—our hearts less indisposed to a reconciliation with God, or until the difficulties to be encountered, and the sufferings to be endured, should become less repulsive. But He counted the cost, and flew to the rescue.

Here again, we have the pattern of the Christian's love,—an example which should shame our coldness, and rebuke our faithless and reluctant efforts. If the believer be constrained by such a love as impelled the Saviour, he will not shrink from his efforts to reclaim souls to God, by the difficulties which may stand in the way. Like the Saviour, he will not wait till burdened

souls come to Him with the cry, "What shall I do to be saved?" But the love of Him who came not only to save, but also to *seek*, the lost, will lead the disciple to watch for souls, as one who must give account. It is a much pleasanter office, indeed, to point the inquiring soul to the Saviour, than to tell the impenitent of the worm that never dies. It is much pleasanter to keep our station near the Cross, and welcome with the song of triumph, each soul as it bows at the Saviour's feet. And so, my hearer, might CHRIST have reposed forever in the bosom of the Father. But He did not; He endured the Cross, and despised the shame, for the joy of redeeming souls from death. Paul counted not his life dear unto him, in comparison of the joy with which he proclaimed the message of his Master. That is the spirit which the Saviour will approve, and upon which God will smile with His encouragements. It is through the instrumentality of His followers that the souls for whom CHRIST died are to be made partakers of His grace. But how shall the work be completed, unless we possess the spirit of our Master,—the spirit of enterprise,—of unwavering faith,—of undaunted hope,—of ardent love,—a spirit that is hindered by no trials,—that yields to no discouragements, but looks over and beyond them all, and sees only the mournful spectacle of souls perishing for lack of spiritual knowledge. As to difficulties, my hearers, God would have us lean more on Him. He loves to be trusted, and has ever rewarded, and ever *will* reward, abundantly, those who honor Him, by placing in Him their trust. And what servant of God will not bear His testimony to the added strength and hope which spring from a simple faith in the word and pro-

mise and assistance of God, and to the diminished energy which is ever the result of a reliance upon anything beneath the might of His Spirit. Then let appearances be what they may;—though discouragements may gather thickly around every step of your path, let not your zeal slacken, nor your love wax cold, nor your efforts know any abatement. Wait not, till some voice amid Satan's strong-holds shall proclaim their willingness to be saved: our effort should rather be to *make* them willing in the day of God's power. That would be Christ-like. The Son of God left the bosom of the Father, when all was dark and uninviting. He toiled amid ingratitude, and insult, and died that He might save His murderers; and that is the spirit by which His people must be actuated, if they would triumph over the powers of darkness.

We have thus far, Brethren, endeavored to show you the spirit in which Christian benevolence should be exerted. We have endeavored to place before you the well-being of the *soul*, as the chief and ultimate object of your regards. We have endeavored to show you, also, from the example of the Redeemer, that Christian love is as broad as the wants and the sufferings of humanity. We have sought to show you too, by a reference to the same great standard of excellence, that nothing is to check our emotions of benevolence, or tempt us to remit our efforts, so long as the cry of spiritual distress appeals to us for relief. We would now, in conclusion, briefly lay before you the force of that constraining motive, which, when felt in its full power, will need the aid of no other logic in urging you to the work: I mean your love *for the Redeemer Himself.*

And here, Brethren, the subject comes home to your own bosoms. We have hitherto talked to you of the souls of *others*,—of *their* salvation, and *their* loss. We ask you now to think for a moment of *your own*. We have spoken of the bliss of heaven, and of the woes of hell: but we have contemplated these solemn themes, in connection with the multitudes about you, who are going down to death. It would seem indeed, as if here were enough, when realized by a vigorous faith, to keep alive your energies, and spur you on to ceaseless labor. But imposing as these motives are, there is one higher and more imposing still. Jesus died, my hearer, to rescue that soul of yours from eternal woe. If you can look forward to Eternity, and indulge the blessed hope of one day entering heaven, and attuning your harp to the strains of redeeming, pardoning grace, remember that this hope, so full of glory, has been purchased for *you* by the Redeemer's blood. Let love for CHRIST, in view of what He has done *for your own* soul, once reign in your bosom, and it will not destroy, but give power and intensity to every other Christian motive. It will lead you to redoubled diligence in striving for others' salvation. I might, indeed, tell you of the greatness of the enterprise, with which CHRIST has, in a measure, entrusted each individual Christian. I might tell you of your vast responsibilities. I might appeal to your Christian sympathies, and point you to one and another of your fellow-immortals, whom you might snatch from perdition, and carry with you in your train to heaven. But I can tell you of an inducement nobler still. There is One who has loved them, and who *still* loves them infinitely more than you can. There is One who has travailed in soul

for them and for you,—who has poured the rich treasures of His grace into *your* heart, that you might be His steward in imparting it to others. *He* asks you, for *His* sake, to be a co-worker with Him, that He may see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. The soul is sometimes weighed down with the magnitude of the thought, that a worm of the dust should not only himself be redeemed to the hopes of an endless life, but that by *his* feeble efforts, he may add to the joys of his Redeemer. By assuming our nature, the Saviour has established so intimate a connection between Himself and His creatures, that He and we can as really sympathise together,—our joys and sorrows can be as really reciprocal, as they can be, between any two of our sinful race. Whenever it is your happiness then, to win a soul from death, remember that you have not only furnished a theme of rejoicing to the Angels of God, but that He also whom Angels worship, shares in the triumph. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Cease not until you stand before the throne of God, and are employed on errands of love and mercy, in a higher and holier sphere of labor.

Sermon 2.

THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE.

S. James iii. 17.—"*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*"

By the term "*Wisdom,*" the Apostle evidently means true religion. He contrasts it, in the context, with a wisdom falsely so called:—thought to be such by those only who pride themselves upon its possession, but which betrays its real character by its *results,* viz., bitter envyings and strife,—confusion and every evil work. Such fruits as these, he assures us, cannot possibly have a heavenly origin. It is a wisdom which is earthly, sensual, devilish." "But the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

In discoursing upon these words, we will endeavor, First, to illustrate the propriety of the term by which St. James characterizes Religion, and then notice its heavenly origin, and its practical results.

I. The sacred writers so often employ the term *Wisdom,* in commending Religion to the regards of men. that we are constrained to believe that He, who is infinitely wise, has led them to do it for distinct and special reasons. There is, perhaps, no other single word, by which a more effective appeal could be made to the minds of a vast multitude of men. *Pride of intellect* is the great obstacle to the triumphs of the Gospel. The wisdom of the world stands arrayed against the wisdom of God. The preaching of the Cross is *foolishness* to myriads of those who choose rather to perish, than yield to the terms of salvation. And such is the corrupting influence of sin, that the minds of many will be less disturbed by the conscious sense of guilt, and the approaching terrors of the Judgment, than by the fear of being called "fools," or having their character for wisdom suspected. If, then, it can be shown that religion can successfully make its appeals to the practical intelligence,—that "*common sense*" by which so many are proud of being governed, we shall have surmounted no slight barrier to its reception.

We remark, then, 1st, that Religion is true wisdom, inasmuch as that alone will lead a man to calculate and act with reference to the whole period of his existence.

That this world does not comprise the whole of our existence,—that the soul of man is immortal, and that through the grave and gate of death we pass to an unchangeable Eternity, are truths, which it is difficult for the most hardened unbeliever to reject, and which none can contemplate with indifference. Thousands, however, who firmly believe them, are living as though Death were an eternal sleep, and the business, or the

pleasures of the world, were all that was worthy of a thought. But if man is to live forever, is it not the part of wisdom to plan for your immortality? Is it not the greatest folly to confine your attention within the little circle of your earthly cares, when before you lies a boundless existence?

But again:—the soul not only feels instinctively her immortality, but there is a monitor within which speaks of a retribution beyond the grave; and these instinctive suggestions are most solemnly confirmed by the clear announcements of the Word of God. Whether your immortality will be one of endless woe, or of endless joy, depends upon the manner in which you here provide for the soul's everlasting welfare. When results of dreadful moment are at stake, does not such a fact stamp with unspeakable folly the conduct of those who are deliberately taking this world for their portion? A few more days, or months, or years,—and all upon which you are now bestowing so much anxious toil, will be forgotten in the grave. When you die, all your hopes will perish, for you have confined them to the earth, from which you shall have departed forever. Awake then, my hearer, to a sense of your immortality! Cast your eye over the broad fields of ETERNITY. Accustom yourself to think of that solemn word, until you shall learn to live with reference to it, and wisely provide for the whole of your endless existence.

2d. True wisdom sacrifices a present apparent good for that which is future and greater.

This principle is well understood, and constantly practiced, by worldly men. Go into any department of life, and you will find it the governing rule of conduct

with every thoughtful and energetic mind. The merchant or the mechanic, who aims at a fortune, will calculate with jealous scrutiny the effect of a present indulgence upon his plans and prospects for life; and if these come in conflict, mere worldly policy will teach him the wisdom of sacrificing his pleasures for what he considers to be his solid interests. O how many sleepless nights, and days of toil and pain have been endured, to secure for the evening of life, that wealth which must perish in the using! How many, in the pursuit of power, or of fame, have been insensible to the allurements of present ease, that they may sway a sceptre for a few brief years, or have their names greeted with applause by dying mortals like themselves! And yet, in the judgment of the world, they would be acting wisely, for they could not secure their ends without these sacrifices.

And now, my hearer, you have but to transfer this principle of action to the concerns of the soul and eternity, in order to perceive that the demands of Religion are in accordance with the dictates of true wisdom. She, too, calls for her sacrifices. The world and all its interests, she esteems as the small dust in the balance, when weighed against your everlasting salvation. She calls upon you to make your choice of one, or the other, —for *both*, you *cannot* have. Is it wise to let go, joys that are everlasting, treasures that will never fail you,— a crown of fadeless glory, and the approbation of your God, for the toilsome, corrupting, deceitful, unsatisfying pleasures which the God of this world offers you?

3d. Religion vindicates its character for true wisdom, by leading the finite creature to bring his will and passions into subjection to the Infinite.

The sovereignty of God is a truth which must force itself, without much reflection, upon every thoughtful mind. That He doeth His will among the armies of heaven, and amidst the inhabitants of the earth, and that all opposition to that will *must* finally bring destruction upon the sinner, is equally clear. Now the great controversy between God and man lies in this conflict of wills. God has revealed His purposes, and requires from man unqualified submission and obedience: and man cannot persist in disobeying without bringing hopeless ruin upon the soul. The result is as *certain* as that God is *omnipotent*. What could bring the folly of the sinner into bolder relief than this? I am not now speaking, my hearers, of your ingratitude,—your insensibility to the touching appeals of a Saviour's love. I would have you look merely at the folly,—the simple madness of resisting the will of Him who is "wise in heart, and mighty in strength. Who both hardened himself against Him, and prospered?" O is it not wise to bend submissive to His will? The fruits of your controversy thus far, have been disappointed hopes,—a saddened heart,—and many fears for the future. But these, my hearer, are but the footsteps of that dreadful doom so certainly approaching, and which will be consummated in bitter lamentation and despair. Be wise, therefore, in this, the day of your salvation. Remember that the Power of God is equalled by His wisdom, His goodness, and His love, and that conformity to His will must be to His creature the source of an abounding peace.

Once more:—A wise man will ever adopt such a course of conduct as will bear reflection.

Reflection may be said to bear the same relation to the life of man, that the *harvest* does to the toil of the husbandman. It is in our hours of reflection that we gather in the fruits of all that we have said, or thought, or done; and this harvest will be one of intense satisfaction and peace, or of unutterable misery,—of regrets that will pierce the soul like barbed and poisoned arrows. Who has not felt their force, in some degree, in the *minor* concerns of life, when in the stillness of some twilight hour, your mind has travelled back over the past, and bitter memories begin to people the solitude of your chamber. Neglected duties,—opportunities slipped from your grasp forever,—thoughtless indiscretions, —passionate indulgences, and, it may be, some dark and secret sins, come rushing in upon the soul, a troop of relentless foes. Such moments have been experienced by many, if not by all, who hear me. Some, unable to bear such thoughts, have fled with haste into the busy scenes of life, there to re-enact their deeds of folly, and lose the sense of guilt, amidst the mirth of companions, or the whirl of occupation. Others have gathered lessons of wisdom, and though smarting under the scourge of self-reproach, have gone forth in the strength of new resolutions, so to live for the future, that thought and reflection shall be welcome companions. My thoughtless hearer! you cannot bear one short hour of reflection now: how then will you bear it upon a dying bed, and throughout the long, long years of Eternity? You have now the world and its follies in which to take refuge from your thoughts; but *then*, the world and its follies will smile at your calamity. Listen, then to the words of eternal wisdom. "If thou hast run with the

footmen, and they have wearied thee, how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?"

II. We proceed to notice as our next topic, the *origin* of this Wisdom.

It is from above. The lessons of the *world* are all of a different character. The world has no schools in which such wisdom as this is taught. *Her* instructions are all confined to the life that now is: she tells us nothing of the undying spirit, or of the way in which we may secure an interest in the life to come. If we would discover the origin of this wisdom, we must look beyond the world and her instructions; and the soul which thirsts for it, must apply to "the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift." True Religion, in all its parts, is a scheme of mercy, devised in heaven, for the salvation of man. God so loved the world as to give His only Son, to shed His blood for the soul's redemption. Jesus, the Beloved of the Father, has offered Himself a willing sacrifice in our behalf. The Holy Spirit imparts His sacred influences to the feeble, the ignorant, and the sinful. God has planted in our midst His Church with her holy ordinances, to impart the instructions of His Word,—and to be the nursery of the soul, the School of CHRIST, in which we are to be trained up in Divine wisdom and grace, till fitted for the Church triumphant.

Perhaps, my hearer, the claims of this Heavenly Wisdom have, at seasons, impressed themselves upon your conscience. Perhaps you have made some efforts to obtain this blessed treasure, but in each effort have felt

your weakness, and have fallen back. May not the secret of your failure lie in the fact, that you strove in your own strength? that you did not look above, in prayerful dependence, to the Source of all good? The power of God's Holy Spirit can alone translate you from the kingdom of Satan into that of His dear Son. Let your earnest supplications ascend to the Lord of all power and might; let your dependence be upon His Spirit, and gird yourself with His strength. Take the Lord Jesus for your Righteousness, your Sanctification, your complete Redemption. Confess Him before the world, and find in the ordinances of His own appointment, that nourishment, and strength, and victory, which CHRIST vouchsafes to the feeblest of His faithful disciples.

III. Let us now attend to some of the blessed fruits of this Heavenly Wisdom.

And First, The Wisdom from above is "*pure*." If you are guided by its teachings, it will lead you to cleanse yourself from all impurity in heart and life. Not only will the practice of sin be avoided, but the very *thought* of it will be abhorrent to your feelings and your tastes. The sins of others will be viewed with pity, or with disgust, and not, as is too often the case, with the smile of levity, or as the theme of frivolous conversation. You will be moved to live as in the presence of Him, who looks upon every secret motion of the heart,—who is Himself of spotless purity, and requireth truth in the inward parts. This attribute of Heavenly Wisdom is, with great propriety, placed at the head of the catalogue; for genuine religion begins in deep and humbling convictions of sin,—of personal unfitness for the presence of a holy God. And the

business of the Christian's life is to make daily and hourly application to that Fountain which has been opened for sin and uncleanness,—to the cleansing energies of the Spirit of purity and grace, for that *holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

True wisdom is *peaceable*. The disciple of CHRIST will ever cultivate in his own bosom a quiet and peaceable disposition, and will be the advocate for peace, whenever his influence can be felt. Personal advantages and desires,—prejudices and tastes,—everything, indeed, but truth and principle,—should be sacrificed at the shrine of Peace. Then, my hearer, and then only, will the way be opened for the Peace of God, which passeth all understanding, to find a lodgment in your heart. Then too, and then only, will you be qualified to act as a peace-maker in the strifes of others, and be an honored agent in establishing the kingdom of peace and righteousness in the earth. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

True wisdom will induce a spirit of *gentleness*. All harshness and violence of feeling, or of manner, are utterly opposed to the Spirit of CHRIST. "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works, with meekness of wisdom." With what exemplary meekness did the Son of God bear the scorn of His enemies: with what gentle dignity did He utter the words of truth and warning! Be persuaded "by the meekness and gentleness of CHRIST," to manifest the spirit of your Master, that the world may take knowledge of you that *you* have been with Him.

True wisdom will make its possessor "*easy to be entreated.*" The true Christian will not suffer his feelings so far to gain the ascendancy over his judgment, as to render him deaf to the language of reconciliation. To all that is right,—to all that is kind,—to all that is accommodating, or that will impart happiness to another, the disciple of CHRIST will ever be *easily* entreated. He will yield, not with sullen reluctance, not in that spirit which robs the concession of all its grace and value, but with the ease of one who requires the very gentlest of all violence to bend him to a brother's will.

The wisdom from above is "*full of mercy and good fruits.*" It will open the heart to sentiments of tenderness,—of kindness, and compassion for the privations, and the sufferings, which are endured by the children of want and sorrow; and it will urge its possessor into paths of active benevolence. O what a sphere of usefulness is here opened to the very humblest disciple of the Saviour! How many hearts are pining in secret grief, which might be made to rejoice, if sought out by the diligent and active mercies of the Christian! Of such feelings, and deeds of mercy, the text informs us, the Christian's heart will be full. Like Him who *went about* doing good, it will be his meat and drink to minister to those who are in any trouble: and, above all, to tell them of the love of One, who, for their sakes, became poor, that they, through His poverty, might be rich. And all this, the possessor of Heavenly Wisdom will do, "*without partiality.*" He will regard the soul of one with as much interest as that of another. He will regard them all, simply as the creatures of God, as the children of a common Father, bound to the same

Eternity,—to the same judgment-seat. In the cultivation of Christian feeling, and in the performance of Christian duty, he knows not the earthly distinctions, which separate men from each other. He is to be merciful after the example of Him, who sendeth His rain upon the just, and upon the unjust.

And now we come to that feature in the Christian character, which should excite in us all great searchings of heart. "*Without hypocrisy,*" is added last by St. James, as the seal of excellence,—without which our works, and our pretensions will be consumed together in the fires of the last day. O of what unutterable moment is it, that every Christian feeling, and every Christian act, should be ordered, as in the sight of Him, who will call every work into judgment;—that we should do *nothing* to be seen of men:—that neither the praise nor the censure of a fellow-worm should lead us into that sin, the most hateful of all others, in the sight of Heaven, the sin of hypocrisy. The specious conduct of many, which seems fair in the eyes of men, will be seen to be a hideous deformity, when God shall make known the secrets of the heart. "As the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so *the root of the* hypocrite shall be as rottenness, and his blossom shall go up as dust." Beware, lest the want of a "godly sincerity," be the consuming worm at the root of all your seeming goodness! Try yourselves, with a fearless honesty, by these inspired tests of Christian character. "Judge ye yourselves, that ye be not judged of the Lord." And may His grace, who alone can keep you from falling, make you, "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke,—sincere and without

offence till the day of CHRIST,—being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus CHRIST unto the glory and praise of God."

Sermon 3.

GROWTH IN GRACE.

II Peter iii. 18.—"*But grow in Grace.*"

Next to the sinner's conversion, the eye of God rests with a watchful interest upon the progress of His professed followers. The Bible abounds with exhortations and warnings to the believer, as well as to the unbeliever. The text is one of those exhortations. It is in agreement with all the teachings of Christ, representing the Christian's life as one of progressive holiness. His language in the parable of "the Mustard seed," and in that of "the Leaven," plainly implies that the conversion of the soul to God, by no means comprises the whole of that vast design which God has unfolded in the Gospel,—that there is still an important work to be accomplished, viz., the *sanctification* of the soul. It is to be feared that this part of God's gracious design is, in practice at least, sadly disregarded. Many who have turned their faces towards Zion, travel but feebly and

slowly in the path which leads to it. Instead of pressing toward the mark for the prize of their high calling, there is many a lingering look at the world which they have professed to renounce. The disciple of the Lord Jesus is too often satisfied with just religion enough to save his soul. The lineaments of the Saviour's image are faint; the flame of devotion burns fitfully and dimly. These things ought not so to be. Every day that we live in this world of sin, should witness our growing conformity to the likeness of CHRIST.

Let me now ask your attention to some of the *Evidences* of Growth in grace,, and to some of the *Motives*, that should urge us to *seek* that growth.

I. The first evidence which I would mention of the believer's growth in grace is, that his pious emotions, and engagedness in the duties of religion, are uniform and habitual, rather than occasional.

That God is unchangeable, must be allowed by all who form correct notions of a perfect being. That no lapse of time, or change of circumstances can possibly effect an alteration in His designs, or mitigate the demands of His law, must necessarily follow. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever: and consequently His relations to His creatures are always the same. If at *any* time, we are bound to love God with all the heart, we are bound to do so at *all* times. Jehovah is never wearied in the exercise of His attributes, but is constantly manifesting around us and towards us, the evidences of His power, goodness, and love. Every moment, we are protected by His Providence;—every moment, we are the pensioners of His bounty, and debtors to His free grace in CHRIST JESUS. What then can be

plainer than our duty? If the power of God is constantly exerted in sustaining our trembling existence, surely our gratitude should be as constant. If His love is ever occupied in planning for our comfort, and in anticipating, and supplying, our unnumbered wants, surely every breath should be praise, and every act, an effort to promote His glory. Such is the rule which reason prescribes:—such is the standard which the Gospel holds up for our guidance. We are not at liberty to lower it.

Take now, Brethren, these righteous requisitions of your Saviour, and make them the test of your characters. The question is not, whether you have *already attained* to this state of unwavering love to God, but whether you have made any considerable *progress* towards it, and are still pressing on: and whether your love and engagedness are becoming more and more, the daily and settled habits of your inner man. Allow me to inquire whether the character of your personal religion is not dependent, far too much on outward circumstances? If all is prosperous around you,—if health invigorates your body, if your character stands fair in the eyes of men, how little you think of Him, "who left His throne of glory, for this world of sin,—endured every privation in life, and suffered a death of untold agony, that you might enjoy the blessings of the life that now is, and the hopes of that which is to come! But when God, in His Providence, strips you of these blessings,—frustrates your cherished plans, or lays you on a bed of suffering, you then begin to reflect more on the emptiness of the world, and on the necessity and blessedness of having God for your portion. This, I cannot doubt, is the experience of many a professed disciple of CHRIST.

And in every such case, the conclusion is irresistible, that his growth in grace has been making but poor advances.

In deprecating this uncertain, fluctuating state of religious feeling, I do not forget that the Christian is surrounded with difficulties,—that his infirmities are many,—that his temptations, and spiritual foes, form mighty barriers in the way of a matured and stable religious character. But let us remember that difficulties are not *impossibilities*,—that however great may be the obstacles in our way, God has pledged us His own Omnipotence, to bring us off more than conquerors. Does it seem, then, too rigid a rule, when we say that the Christian should, at all times, and under all circumstances, feel the constraining influence of a Saviour's love? Is it asking too much that the warmth of his affection should partake more of the constancy of God's love to us, instead of being dependent for its activity, and almost for its being, on the vicissitudes of life? No, Brethren:—elevated as the standard may be, it is no higher than God has placed it. The achievement, though difficult, is practicable. He, who said to His once fainting Apostle, "My grace is sufficient for thee," is ready to impart His strength to our weakness. Too many solace themselves with the mistaken thought that the condition of the believer in this world, must, as a matter of course, ever be of a chequered character; and the consequence is that their devotion dies,—every spring of action becomes loosened, and God is dishonored. Believer! your course should be ever onward: you cannot aim too high. Press on, until you shall see a God to love and adore, whatever may be the state of

things around you. He is ever the same,—equally worthy of your love, both in prosperity and adversity,—in health and in sickness. You may find here *one* test of your growth in grace.

2. A second evidence of the believer's growth, is, that his *duties* become his *privileges*.

"Love," says the Apostle, is "the fulfilling of the law;" the meaning of which is not, that the bare emotion of love is a substitute for practical obedience, but that in the mind of the believer, the great stimulus to obedience is *love*. Here is the great mark of distinction between the man who has been renewed after the image of God and the man, who is still in the ignorance of the natural mind. The former is enabled to say with David, O Lord! "how I love Thy Law;" and his obedience will be nothing more than the following out of the tendencies and instincts of a new nature. The latter esteems the commandments of God to be grievous: he either shrinks from them altogether, or attempts to lower their claims: if he obeys at all, it is not because the simple act of obedience gives him pleasure, but because he hopes to secure salvation as his reward.

But all the impulses of a new nature are comparatively weak; they partake of all the characteristics of infancy, and need the nurturing hand of God, to give them their full effectiveness. The remains of a corrupt nature, too, will struggle hard for a lost ascendancy; so that though the new-born soul may see, as she never saw before, that a good and a holy God is worthy of her highest love,—though she may glow with the ardor of a new affection, and imagine that she shall never tire in the service of so good a Master, she soon learns from

experience her feebleness. Then comes the crisis. Here is the believer's danger. It is then that he should listen to the admonition of the Apostle, "Grow in grace." Seek by all the means which God has furnished, to strengthen these first principles of your spiritual being; and when you find obedience beginning to be a burden, —when you are disposed to *excuse* yourself from active engagedness in the cause of CHRIST, do not deceive yourself with the unworthy notion that such must necessarily and always be the imperfect developements of the Christian character. Rather than yield to the risings of corruption, go and carry your case before the mercy-seat of your God: tell Him of your weakness,—how much you need the support of His grace. Pray without ceasing, that you may have such views of His glory,—such impressions of His love, that so far from loitering, and doing His behests reluctantly, you may *run* in the way of His commandments. O, that a child of God should ever think it a hardship to do anything for Him. Is it not rather unspeakable condescension in Him to *permit* a worm of the dust to be an instrument in the accomplishment of His beneficent designs. Think of the high honor to which He has exalted you; think of the price with which your privilege has been purchased. Think of it, and pray over it, until you shall esteem His service to be perfect freedom. Meditate upon your relations to God as a most undeserving, yet redeemed, sinner,—redeemed by the blood of a suffering Saviour, until the best you can do, shall seem indeed but too little for such a Lord. It is a thought, extensively harbored, that *eminence* in the Christian life is the privilege of a few. Satan has used this weapon with suc-

cess, and has shorn thousands of their strength. The holiness of the Bible is for *all*. It is to *every* believer that St. Peter speaks in the language of our text. "Grow in grace," until the holy law of a holy God shall be inscribed in characters of love upon your hearts;—until you feel it to be not only your *duty*, but your *happiness*,—your privilege, to do the will, and promote the glory, of God.

3. A third evidence of the Christian's growth in grace, may be found in the manner in which he meets and uses the *trials* of life.

This world is the theatre of our *probation*. The soul is here to be disciplined and fitted for another world. This is God's great design in all His dealings with the Christian. The dispensations of His Providence are all intended for the everlasting spiritual good, of those who love Him. Now as God desires the holiness of His people, so it must be His will, that they also should make it the great end of their being. Every aim, and wish, and hope of the believer should terminate in this, —*his soul's sanctification*.

Now what is it, Brethren, that constitutes a *trial?* Is it not something in the providential arrangements of God, which defeats *our* designs,—plucks from our grasp some fondly cherished idol, something around which we had suffered the strong affections of the soul to gather, and which we find it painful to relinquish? And yet *God* has done it,—He, who does not willingly afflict,—who is more anxious than we are that our present and everlasting happiness should be secured. Why is it then that we complain? Why is it, that any of the dispensations of God should excite a murmur? To this,

there can be but one reply:—our aims, our designs, our wishes, are not in full accordance with the designs, and the wishes of God. He never would frustrate his own plans: and if *ours* were formed with an unwavering reference to His, we should never be disappointed. This, Brethren, will be the happiness of heaven. The fact that there will be no trials there, may be resolved simply into this, that *there, our* wills will be entirely and sweetly subjected to His own. The life of the believer here should be a type of his approaching eternity. If there, to be with, and to be like, his God, will be the fulness of his bliss, so should it be his great business,—his chief happiness here, to increase in holiness, and in preparedness for the presence of his God. In proportion as this is the case with the Christian, will the multiplied changes around him be regarded almost with indifference. Riches may take to themselves wings, and fly away, but he is little concerned, so long as the interests of his never-dying soul are untouched. Disease and death may claim him as their victim, and the grave may close over his lifeless corpse,—but the immortal spirit still lives, and thrives, and is happy. Is it not evident, then, that if the interests of our souls are our chief concern,—if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, our condition, in other respects, will be to us a matter of but little moment. What formerly constituted our trials, will affect us less and less. The world and its countless changes will disturb us less and less; for our hearts and our treasures, will be independent of the world. Here then, we have another safe test of our growth in grace. Have the trials of life less power than formerly to rob us of our peace? Can we

more easily rise up under the pressure of affliction, and rejoice that, whatever else may be taken from us, we have the everlasting God for our *sufficient*, and *more* than sufficient, portion? Amid all the bereavements of life, can we say with David, "As for me, I shall behold *Thy* face in righteousness;—I shall be satisfied when I awake up in *Thy* likeness."

But, Brethren,—*Resignation* to the will of God, though undoubtedly a great grace, and much to be coveted, is not, after all, the height at which we are to aim. It partakes too much of a negative character,—too much of the mere absence of complaint and rebellion, to be ranked among the chief excellencies of the Christian character. To lie *merely* submissive to the will of God, when that will contradicts our own, savors yet of weakness and immaturity. There is a growth which advances beyond this. It is possible for the Christian to be so intent upon his spiritual improvement, as to *rejoice* in tribulation, and gladly to kiss the rod that smites him. We do not mean that religion requires us to take pleasure in affliction, for *affliction's sake*. St. Paul teaches us a more sober philosophy. "No chastening for the present," he says, "seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." But, for the sake of the great and glorious *end* in view, viz. our sanctification, we may welcome even those dispensations, which to the world, seem so undesirable. Religion is the true philosopher's stone; it turns *all* that it touches, into *gold*. Everything,—even the darkest scenes of life, will thus be made subservient to our happiness. Afflictions do not spring from the dust. They are as much the work of God as our obvious blessings. They form but part and parcel

of the great system of means, which a wise God has adopted, to make us the partakers of his holiness. It only requires that we should co-operate, with God, with the whole heart, and then, instead of lying passive under the ills of life, we should grapple with them, in the strength of a holy energy, and make them ministers of good,—most effective means of our spiritual advancement. Thus, Brethren, we shall be made more than conquerors: with the Apostle, we shall *glory* in *tribulations* also. When we are able to rejoice that we are counted *worthy* to suffer for CHRIST'S sake;—when we can say, "Unto us it is *given*, not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for Him," then shall we indeed have an evidence that we have not received the grace of God in vain.

Such are a few of the evidences of growth in grace. We have purposely placed the standard high; but in doing so, we have studiously taken the Word of God for our guide.

The standard has been placed high, because in any arduous undertaking, there is a propensity of our nature, unless the aim be lofty, to rest satisfied with *partial* attainments. In the work of his salvation, how lofty are the aspirations of the believer! to be the companion of angels and arch angels, to stand with them around the throne of God, and as the years of eternity roll on, to gaze upon the unveiled majesty of the Godhead, until he shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory! O how worthy to engage every faculty of the soul,—every affection of the heart!

II. This leads to the second branch of our subject, viz. the *Motives* that should urge you to the performance of the duty before us.

And 1. I would remark, that if you are *not* going forward in the Christian life, you will certainly be going backward. If you are not daily accumulating your treasure in heaven, you will be daily suffering a loss. This is obvious from the very nature of the human mind. Its faculties are always in operation: our thoughts are ever restless,—ever occupied upon something; and if they be not occupied with things that are holy, lovely, and of good report, they will be with their opposites. And so with our affections; they will follow in the train of our thoughts. The affections, too, are restless. We must have something to love, and something, that we may love with the whole heart. Since, then, the faculties of the soul are ever on the alert,—if they are not exercised *for* God, they will be *against* Him. He that is not with Me, says the Saviour, is *against* Me: and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth abroad. There is no such thing as standing still. And when the soul, having once covenanted with GOD, begins to draw back, O how fearful is the liability of its drawing back unto perdition. All the motives and arguments that the goodness and wisdom of God could devise, were exhausted in inducing you to flee from the wrath to come. Heaven has in store no stronger reasons for your steadfastness than those which first won your heart to the Redeemer. "There is no deeper hell with which to alarm your fears,—there is no heaven of greater bliss, with which to cheer your hopes,—there is no other Saviour of more tender compassion," to stand in the way of the backslider, and arrest him in his path to destruction. Be entreated, then, by the bright hopes which once cheered you, and by former joys now departed, to

strengthen the things which remain, and return to your first love!

And finally, I would urge the duty in question, by a regard for your own happiness. A professing Christian, whose heart is not whole with God,—who does not make his religion the business of his life, cannot be truly happy; and in order to grow in grace, it is indispensably necessary that the whole heart and soul should be devoted to the work. If not thus devoted, we shall not only fail to make advances in the Divine life, but find ourselves placed just in that position which will render us most miserable. Where will you find a man more wretched than he, whose heart is after his idols, and whose conscience is goading him with unfaithfulness to his God? The recollection of religious joys will cleave to the soul, and go with her into the haunts of gaiety and pleasure, and embitter all her comfort. Go where she will, peace,—calm, settled peace,—will be a stranger. O then break away from this unworthy bondage, and come forth into the liberty of CHRIST. Give your heart more entirely to the Saviour. Let the brief remnant of your life be His. Live near to the mercy-seat of your God. Daily sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of Him. Thus will you go from strength to strength, till the God of all grace shall admit you to the joys which are at His right hand forevermore!

Sermon 4.

THEMES OF PRAISE.

(THANKSGIVING DAY.)

PSALM CXVIII. 1.—"*O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; because His mercy endureth forever.*"

Among the three great feasts annually celebrated by the Jews, was the feast of Tabernacles. It occurred at the conclusion of the harvest and vintage. During the celebration of this festival, the Jews dwelt in tents,—in memory of their forefathers' dwelling in tents, during their passage through the wilderness. It thus served the double purpose of commemorating the former distressed condition of the Church, and of returning thanks to God for the fruits of the earth gathered in each year. On the last day, the *great* day, of the Feast, the Psalm, which commences with our text, was one of those, which were sung with the strongest expressions of joy, by the people, as they went up to the House of God, to join in its hosannas. Hence, having been originally used under circumstances very similar to those under which we are convened to-day, the language of our text may well

be adopted by *us:* and as we take a brief review of the past year's blessings, it becomes us to unite our voices, with those of the pious Israelites, in exclaiming, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: because His mercy endureth forever."

Perhaps we cannot find a more suitable division of our subject than that suggested by our Chief Magistrate, —which, in substance, embraces these three topics;— Thanks to God, 1. For blessing the labors of industry with an abundant harvest; 2. For the possession of civil and political privileges, which secure to us the avails of our industry: Lastly, and above all, for the continuance among us of the ministrations of the Gospel, with its hopes and consolations.

I. And, First, we are called upon to thank God for blessing the labors of industry with an abundant harvest.

A little reflection on the peculiar process, by which the tiller of the earth gains the end of his labors, will show us, that his obligations of gratitude to God are specially *manifest.* The merchant, in the prosecution of his enterprises, finds that his native talents and ingenuity are brought into requisition at every step. Oft-times, from the commencement to the conclusion of his extensive plans, the powers of a vigorous mind are actively exerted in uniting the several links in the chain of his success. So, too, the mechanic, in the several products of his art, can trace the evidences of his own skill and handiwork, in each step of the process. In these instances, there is so much of human agency *visibly* employed in bringing about the ultimate result, as to lead men to forget, in a great measure, their dependence upon a higher power. But this is not so much the

case of the husbandman. True, he has his part to perform, before the fields can be made white for the harvest. But, between his early labors and the final ingathering of his sheaves, there is an interruption of his own agency, by which he is practically reminded of the fact, and of the necessity, of a *higher* agency. He diligently turns the sod, and plants the seed. Thus far he may go, but no farther, in bringing to maturity the waving grain. At this point, he retires, and looks to Heaven for its blessing. What has he to do with the mysterious decay and dissolution of the seed which lies imbedded in the earth? What has he to do with the germinating process, by which it springs up into new life, and gradually presents, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear? What has he to do with the bestowment of the genial influences of the sun,—with the quickening, and refreshing visits of the rain, and of the dew? In all these, he beholds, or *should* behold and adore, the hand of an all-wise and benevolent Parent. The break in the chain of his own personal operations, is supplied with the wonder-working power of Omnipotence. And what an opportunity is here afforded him for passing from nature up to nature's God! Whence is it, that whilst man withholds his hand in conscious impotence, there is still an efficient agency at work, bringing about the consummation of his wishes? Whence is it, that while he sleeps, his crops are making a sure progress to maturity? It is simply because the Lord reigns. He it is, who visiteth the earth and watereth it; He watereth the ridges thereof abundantly; He maketh it soft with showers; He blesseth the springing thereof; He crowneth the year with

His goodness, and His paths drop fatness. Well, then, may the husbandman rejoice that the Lord reigneth. Well may he acknowledge the kind and beneficent Providence of Him, who has promised that while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease.

But the Providence of God, though not so remarkably *visible*, is not to be the less acknowledged, in every other employment of life. The same hand which meets the expectations of the husbandman, in blessing his labors with the rains, and the dews of heaven, withholds His fierce winds, whilst the favorable gale wafts the merchantman to its destination: and then again, when the hopes of the merchant are brightest, he hears of some desolating tempest, or some sweeping surge, which has buried in the depths of ocean, or scattered into useless fragments the concentrated gains of a life of anxiety and industry.

While we look, then, upon the prosperity of our country, and witness the happiness, which, to a great extent, pervades every portion of it, let us not forget to render the tribute of gratitude that is due to Him, "who openeth His hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness."

II. But, Secondly, we are called upon to thank God for the possession of those civil and political privileges, that secure to us the avails of our industry.

And here, Brethren, I shall not occupy your attention with any eulogies upon the superior excellence of our political institutions. I will take for granted, that their *intrinsic*, as well as *comparative*, excellence, is admitted, and duly appreciated by all; and would dismiss this point, by simply remarking, that whilst we speak

with an honest and patriotic pride, of the heritage, which has been left us by the bravery and perseverance of our fathers, let us not forget our obligations to Him, by whom, "Kings reign, and princes decree justice," and who "divideth to the nations their inheritance."

The topic which I wish more particularly to press upon your attention is,—the *security* we possess for the *permanency* of our national existence. The inhabitants of the old world beheld with no ordinary feelings our struggle for independence, and have ever since regarded us with feelings, that differed, according to their different political creeds. Whilst the friends of liberty hailed, with a trembling exultation, the dawn of a new era in the science of government, the adherents of despotism arrayed themselves in opposition to our fathers, not only by the substantial argument of the sword, but by representing their efforts as the day-dream of a few political fanatics. And now that we have succeeded in founding and establishing a home for the free, and a refuge for the oppressed, the same feelings still exist. The patriot, wearied with struggling against the tide of adverse influences, still turns his eye to these shores, as a beacon-light, illumining the darkness of his horizon; and his bosom heaves with sympathetic joy, as he views the onward career, and the growing influence, of our free institutions. And on the other hand, the political bigot, capable of seeing nothing except through the medium of the superannuated and crumbling systems of past ages, speaks of our Republic, as an untried experiment; and thinks he can discern divers prognostics of our dissolution. And there are not wanting those among ourselves, who cherish but a feeble hope of our national

continuance. In a word, the *permanency of our institutions*, is considered by many as a problem, which time only can solve. But is this so? Such may, indeed, be the conclusion, to which the wisdom of the mere politician would lead him; but if, as Christians, we examine more carefully the foundations, upon which our political fabric has been reared, we shall find cause, I think, for ample encouragement. Those foundations were laid deeper than the mere wisdom and foresight of human contrivance. They were laid in the *prayers* of our fathers,—in their humble, pious, fervent appeals for assistance to the God of battles,—in earnest supplications for *guidance* to Him, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Yes! while the little band of patriots was contending in the field against a fearful odds,—the halls of our national assembly, instead of resounding with the din of political strife, were the scene of solemn ejaculations to Heaven, that the apparently unequal contest might terminate in favor of righteousness and humanity. Oh! who can calculate the availing influence, which these humble addresses of the wise and good, exerted upon the destinies of our country? Whatever may be the record of the *historian* as to the causes of our success,—whatever our emotions of gratitude to our Revolutionary sires for their self-denying exertions in behalf of our liberties, the Christian will trace these causes to a higher source, and direct the breathings of his grateful spirit to the God and Father of all his mercies. He will regard his civil and political privileges, not as results accruing in the *ordinary* providence of God, but as a gift, in answer to the prayers of the righteous,—as a special boon from heav-

en, and as demanding from him a special acknowledgment. And here it is that he founds *his* hopes for the *permanency* of our liberties. They were *originally* the *gift* of God in answer to prayer; and so long as we shall continue, as a nation, to imitate our fathers, not only in our attachment to the liberties which they purchased for us, but in the spirit of *piety*, which animated them, so long, and so long only, can we hope that our happiness and prosperity will be continued. We shall have the surest pledge in the faithfulness of an unchangeable God, that what prayer *first* procured for us, prayer will secure to us. As we value, then, the importance of our political privileges,—as we would wish to have them perpetuated from generation to generation, to our latest posterity, let us be careful not to forsake the God of our fathers; let us not cease to render our prayers and thanksgivings to God, who has been to us so good, and whose mercy endureth forever.

III. We are called upon, in the last place, to thank God that He has continued to us the ministrations of the Gospel, with its hopes and consolations.

To enumerate *all* the blessings which have flowed from the possession of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, though an interesting and instructive employment, would be far too extensive an undertaking for the present occasion. I would briefly advert, in general terms, to the benefits we derive from it, both nationally and individually.

The history of the rise and progress, and of the decline and fall, of nations under the dominion of paganism, presents a painful tissue of all that is revolting to the best feelings of humanity. It will be sufficient to men-

tion but a single feature in their policy. War, with all the evils which necessarily follow in its train, (evils incalculably aggravated among those who knew nothing beyond the restraints of a heathen morality,)—*war* was their chief engine of national greatness. Martial courage was, with them, synonymous with virtue; and the man who could succeed, by the ruthless violence of the sword, in sending the largest number of his fellow-beings into eternity, was welcomed, on his return from the battle-field, with the highest honors of his country. The annalist has emblazoned on the page of history, in colors of such captivating splendor, the career of the successful conqueror, that the mind of the reader is irresistibly borne along with him, in the rapidity of his movements; and we seldom pause and look back, to mark the wide-spread desolation, which he has left behind him. In such a state of society as that, there could, of course, be no security for happiness, or for liberty, except in the possession and the exercise of physical strength. Misery, incalculable misery, would be the lot of the weak and the defenceless. And why is it, Brethren, that we do not witness among ourselves, at this day, such a sanguinary code of political morality? It is owing entirely to the mild and peace-speaking tones of the religion of the Gospel,—that Gospel which, when carried out to the full extent of its benevolent principles, shall teach the people of the earth to beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, so that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

But it is more distinctly and emphatically, as *individuals*, that we are able, in a great measure, to realise

the inestimable value of those hopes and consolations, which the religion of the Redeemer can administer. Without those hopes and consolations, earth, with all her verdant hills and fruitful valleys,—with her mines of wealth, and the pride and pomp of her honors, would be but a barren and cheerless desert, with nothing that could satisfy the longings and the far-reaching ambition of the immortal spirit. For the fashion of this world passeth away. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat;—the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up; but the Christian can take his stand upon the ruins of the Universe,—and in the enjoyment of a hope, which is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, he can look forward with confidence to the possession of a rich, and enduring inheritance beyond the grave. We have called upon the husbandman to thank God for the blessing of an abundant harvest. But what is it to him, that his grounds bring forth so plentifully as to more than fill his granaries, if at the same time, he is destitute of an interest in the hopes and consolations of the Gospel? If, in the self-satisfied spirit of a grovelling mind, he is disposed to say, Soul! thou hast much goods laid up for many years,—take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,—whose shall all those things be, which he has provided, when God shall require his soul? We have called upon the merchant to thank God for his hoarded treasures. But what is it to him, that he is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day, if, at the same time, he is destitute of the robe of his Redeemer's righteousness, and to be excluded from the marriage-supper

of the Lamb? What is it to the statesman, that his ears are greeted with flattering applause of the multitude,—that his brow is decked with the fairest honors in his country's gift, if he has loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, and has sacrificed an unfading crown of glory, for the perishing laurels of human gratitude? You, my Brethren, who are in possession of the blessings of the Gospel, though it should be all that you could call your own, would have no need to envy *such* merchants, or *such* statesmen. If they are called upon to thank God for His mercies, O how much more should *you* call upon your souls, and all that is within you, to bless His holy name, who has forgiven you all your iniquities, and has redeemed your life from destruction! How much more should you, grasping hopes and consolations, which the world can neither give, nor take away, exclaim in the language of the text, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; because His mercy endureth forever!"

Sermon 5.

THE LORD KNOWN BY HIS JUDGMENTS.

PSALM IX. 16.—"*The Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.*"

In the persecutions to which David was subjected, he endured and suffered, looking to God for deliverance, and trusting in Him at all times, as a tower of strength; and God, who never disappoints the trusting soul, manifested His faithfulness by many and great deliverances, and by causing the plots of enemies to recoil, with disastrous violence, upon themselves,—thus becoming the providential instruments of their own discomfiture. In the text, David alludes to these gracious interpositions of the Almighty. He did not regard them as ordinary occurrences, nor as fortunate escapes. They bore too evidently the impress of the power, the justice, and the goodness of God, to allow of so inadequate and infidel a construction. Contemplating them in the attitude of a soul patiently waiting upon God, his faith discerned therein the timely aid of his Covenant Helper. The events were, in themselves, so peculiar, and so strikingly

calculated in their result, to vindicate the character of God, as to impress upon the mind of the Psalmist the sentiment of the text:—"The Lord *is known* by the judgment which He executeth."

May the Spirit of the Lord lead us to give to the subject the same solemn heed, with which the Psalmist seems to have regarded it!

That "the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands," appears to have been the fact which specially attracted the attention of David, and from which he deduced the general proposition contained in the first portion of our text,—"The Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth." We shall not, however, confine ourselves to that single illustration, but proceed to enumerate a few of the many characteristics of the Divine judgments, by which they may infallibly be known as the wonderful workings of Jehovah.

I. The Lord is known by the judgments which He executeth, when by their infliction, the righteous are succored, and the ungodly are punished.

In making this statement, we are not unmindful of our Saviour's caution to those who told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. But it is one thing *rashly* to pronounce upon the character and purposes of the Divine dispensations, and quite another to acknowledge the hand of God in such as clearly manifest His special agency. None, we presume, will deny, that in the course of His providential government, events have transpired, so singularly productive of benefit to His people, and of confusion and dismay to His enemies, as to indicate, beyond a question, the purposes and designs of Jehovah. When, for

instance, the world of the ungodly were overwhelmed in the mighty flood of waters, and Noah and his family *alone* rode securely upon the deep,—when the cities of the plain, with their guilty inhabitants, were buried in a storm of fire from heaven, and Lot *alone*, the servant of the Lord, was conducted in safety from the impending ruin,—when the smitten waters of the sea made bare their channel, that *the people of God* might pass over, and the persecuting Pharaoh and his host found their graves in the returning billows, and when the little flock of CHRIST found means to escape from the doomed city of Jerusalem, while the unbelieving Jews, hemmed in by Roman armies, and watched by Roman malice, drank to the very dregs the cup of wrath, can we fail to discover in these events, and in their circumstances, the awful retributions of Jehovah, as well as His discriminating mercy?

When the Psalmist says that *the Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth*, he does not simply mean that the Almighty thus exhibits the greatness of His power, making mankind to tremble at the displays of His Omnipotence; but that the *character* of those judgments is such in effecting the purposes of righteous government, as to unfold His *moral attributes*, as a God of holiness and of justice. And as we read upon the pages of His Word, His hatred of sin, and His love of righteousness, it cannot certainly be uninteresting or uninstructive, to turn then to the Book of His Providences, and see there the same God manifesting Himself; in every act of His almighty power, reflecting the revelations of His Word, and thus teaching us by every mode of instruction, that "verily, there is a reward for the righteous, —verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth!"

The acts of God's providence become thus, to the student of His character, the very best commentary upon His Word. He has there declared His inflexible opposition to every form of impurity and sin, and that though His mercy may bear long with the sinner, yet the wicked shall at last reap the bitter fruit of his transgression. He has also declared His unchanging favor to the righteous, that though their sun may at times be clouded, they shall not be forgotten by Him, upon whose promise and oath they are resting for salvation, but shall, in due time, be succored by Him who is yet to judge the world in righteousness. What more efficient prop could we ask for a weak and wavering faith, than to *see* God, at times, fulfilling His Word? What more fearful and certain token of a coming wrath for the wicked, than when the Lord thus makes Himself known by the judgment which He executeth?

The subject may be narrowed down from this broad and general aspect, to the experience,—the fears and hopes of every individual. Each one of us must answer for himself to his righteous Judge for the deeds done in the body. The Lord is not merely the Governor of the world at large. It is not merely the accumulated guilt of the old world, and the enormities of Sodom and Gomorrah, that call forth His terrible judgments.—Within the circle of each man's history, the Lord makes Himself known by the judgment which He executeth. The sin which you committed in secret,—the course of unrighteous dealing, upon which you have ventured to build your hopes of worldly advantage, has terminated in disappointment, and shame, and loss. Some deed which conscience condemns will not let you rest, because

it is unpleasant to remember, and you cannot forget it. It is the Lord thus making Himself known to you in His righteous judgment. He will not suffer your sin to go unrebuked here, and unless repentance, and faith in the Redeemer prevent, He will execute all His wrath, in the day of final retribution.

II. The judgments of the Lord are known by their *retributive* character.

It has well been remarked that God frequently makes the sinner read his sin in his punishment: i. e. the character of the punishment bears a close analogy, and sometimes an exact resemblance to the sin of which he has been guilty.

We find this principle of the Divine Government set forth in one of the earliest enactments of the Bible. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed:" (a rule, which it is to be hoped, for the good of society, none of the sophistical reasonings of a false philanthropy will ever succeed in abrogating.) "Woe," says the Prophet, "to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! When thou shalt cease to spoil, *thou* shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee." "Judge not," says the Saviour, "that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, *ye shall be judged*, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." "He shall have judgment without mercy," says St. James, "who hath shewed no mercy." "He that leadeth into captivity, shall *go* into captivity: he that killeth with the sword, *shall be killed with the sword.*" "And I heard

the angel of the waters say,—Thou art righteous, O Lord! which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus,—for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and *Thou hast given them blood to drink*, for they are worthy; and I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments."

And must we not all respond, Amen! to this rule of righteous adjudication? What more just,—what more simple,—what more effectual, method of bringing our sin to remembrance, than thus to reflect it back upon the conscience, by the infliction of a corresponding punishment?

The Lord, who has thus so solemnly declared in His Word the *principle* of His righteous administration, has not unfrequently made Himself known also in the *execution* of His judgment. Men of blood have almost always come to a bloody end. The blasphemer, and the despiser of the meek and lowly Saviour, whilst defying his Maker, and calling down upon his soul the anger of the Almighty, has been taken at his word, and the bolt has descended whilst the lip was yet warm with the breath of his impiety. But we may come to still more particular and marked illustrations of our subject, so clearly indicating the finger of God, that all must discern it.

David, though a man of God, was left to fall into grievous sin against God, and against his fellow-man; he was guilty of the double crime of murder and adultery; and though upon his sincere repentance, God forgave him his sin, yet He suffered it not to pass without the severest manifestation of His displeasure. "*The*

sword shall never depart from thy house; because thou hast despised Me." The subsequent history of David was a fulfilment of this announcement of a righteous God. His sons, with the exception of Solomon, were all slain, before he himself descended to the tomb. But the most striking feature of the retribution was in the rebellion of Absalom, the son of his bosom,—the child of his partial love. The King of Israel was made to read his sin in his punishment, when, driven from his throne and kingdom by the violence of his unnatural offspring, he went up, barefooted and desolate, the ascent of Olivet, weeping tears of anguish and repentance. The Lord was most fearfully made known in the execution of this judgment. And the taunt of Shimei, though pointed with a different allusion, was well calculated to awaken bitter reflection,—"Behold thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art *a bloody man.*"

When the Saviour was arraigned in the judgment hall of Pilate, and the conscience of even a heathen Governor shrank from shedding the blood of that innocent Sufferer, the Jews shouted with blind and suicidal malice, "His blood be *on us, and on our children!*" The curse which they imprecated fell with speedy violence. Jerusalem was destroyed, and in the midst of that dreadful carnage, the walls of the city presented a spectacle painful indeed, yet full of warning and instruction, when by hundreds and by thousands, they who had crucified the Lord of Glory, were themselves seen struggling in all the agonies of crucifixion. And how is it still with those guilty despisers of the Son of God? They rejected their *King;* and he has rejected *them* from being a kingdom and a nation. They mocked the humble

Jesus of Nazareth; He was a wanderer among them, and knew not where to lay His head: and *their children* have ever since been a bye-word in the earth, down-trodden, and scorned and cast out from the fellowship of men.

These are some of the conspicuous instances, in which the Lord has made himself known in the execution of *Retributive* justice. But it is a principle of the Divine dealings, not confined to nations, or to mighty offenders. It may be discovered in the discipline which He frequently exercises upon His unfaithful members, and in the dispensations by which He calls sinners to repentance. The Saviour, my Christian brother, claims your supreme affections. He will suffer no rival to take that place in your regards, to which His condescension and dying love entitle *Him alone*. But how many are the idols to which you bow, whilst CHRIST receives but a partial and reluctant homage. "Thus saith the Lord, Every one that setteth up his idols in his heart, and cometh to the prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the Lord will answer him according to the multitude of his idols." Some object which you may lawfully love, is loved, insensibly perhaps, more than CHRIST. It may be, the offspring which God has given you, is stealing you away from the love and service of the Saviour. Beware lest God shall call you to read your sin in its punishment; lest wasting sickness, and the blighting hand of death, shall remove your idol, that you may love none but CHRIST. Perhaps you may have fallen far down in the path of the backslider. What once seemed the reasonable standard of Christian duty is now thought too rigid. You may deem it extravagance,—

fanaticism, being righteous overmuch, to deny yourself the pleasures of the world. Ah! such reasoning may satisfy you, whilst your day is bright, and you can *enjoy* these pleasures. But remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. When affliction in some of its many shapes, shall make you turn with loathing from the world, and your bereaved spirit longs and prays for heavenly consolations, *but you find them not*, will it not be a righteous retribution? Peace, and hope, and joy in the hour of trouble, are for those who live near to CHRIST in the hour of prosperity. But you have chosen to follow Him afar off, and He will now answer you according to your idols. The Lord will make Himself known in the execution of His judgment, by withholding the grace which you have slighted, and leave you perhaps to tread your path to heaven with a weak and halting faith.

But if the judgments of the Lord are not withheld from His people, how heavily will they fall upon the stubbornly impenitent? The SPIRIT of GOD, my hearers, has striven with you in times past. By all the melting motives of a SAVIOUR'S love, and the dreadful awards of a miserable Eternity, He has pressed home upon your heart and conscience, the importance of your soul's salvation. But you have said, and perhaps are *now* saying,—"Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." And if the SPIRIT thus grieved, *should* depart, would it not be a righteous retribution? If, upon the couch of sickness, and in the hour of death, you should call, but call in vain, for the grace and comfort which you have rejected, you would read your sin in its punishment. The hand of the Lord

will be seen in the execution of this judgment. You have rejected CHRIST, and He Himself has declared the principle of retributive justice, when He said, "He that denieth Me before men, him will I deny before My Father, and the holy Angels."

III. The Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth, by making the sinner the Agent in his own punishment.

David has given expression to this sentiment in the latter clause of our text,—"The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." As we have before remarked, the Psalm here speaks with reference to the unceasing devices of his enemies to entrap him, but which resulted in their own confusion and defeat. And the result has uniformly been the same in the history of the Church of CHRIST. Whenever the ungodly have arisen in open opposition to the truth, the very measures they have adopted to secure their ends, have not only failed in doing the expected injury to the cause of the Redeemer, but have proved some of the most fruitful occasions of the SAVIOUR'S triumph. The very *wrath* of man has been made by God the occasion of praise to Him, while the remainder of wrath He has restrained. And it is one of the strongest grounds of the believer's faith in the ultimate establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom, that the interests of that kingdom have not only been advanced by the positive efforts of its friends, but also by the opposition of its foes. What falsehoods have not been forged,—what slanders have not been hurled against the peaceful cause of CHRIST! And what has been the issue of such schemes, but to surround the truth with a more impregnable defence, and to weaken

and prostrate the energies of the wicked? One illustration, as it lies at the foundation of our subject, will suffice. The enemies of the Cross, in their blind malignity, were persuaded, that if they could but compass the death of the Saviour, and hide Him in the grave, it would be a signal and final defeat of all His pretensions. They urged on their impious work until they succeeded. Jesus was crucified, and was buried; and the darkness which at that awful moment veiled the sun, seemed to fall also on the hopes of all who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem. But the grave, and the bands of death were not strong enough to retain the Lord of Life. He awaked from His brief slumber; and His enemies, who were watching His sealed sepulchre, fled trembling before the might of a rising Redeemer. They were "*snared* in the work of their own hands." For that which they thought was their *victory,* was the pledge of their most signal defeat. "CHRIST *crucified*" is now, and ever will be, the believer's hope and joy. Jesus has risen from the tomb, and He now reigns a King in glory; and He will continue to reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. As surely as Jesus rose again, and liveth evermore, His opposers will find themselves the agents in their own destruction.

There is, then, a marked propriety in the Psalmist's calling attention to this feature of the subject. That the sinner is *his own destroyer,* is one of the most momentous of truths. CHRIST, my impenitent friend, is contending for the sovereignty of your heart. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. It is not in the great and stirring events of the religious world, that we perceive the essential character of that

struggle which is going on between the Powers of darkness and the Prince of light. The kingdom of God is within you. The *heart of the sinner* is the field upon which the Son of God, by His Spirit, achieves His lasting victories. You may not be willing to engage in open warfare with the cause of CHRIST, but in the secret chambers of the soul, where the SPIRIT strives and pleads, you are engaged in a conflict, which, if you persevere, must end in your defeat and everlasting ruin. Woe! unto him that striveth with his Maker! In refusing to yield to the claims of CHRIST, you may succeed in repelling His Spirit; but you will be digging the grave of your own soul. He may never trouble you again with His approaches; and, deceived by a false peace, you may not *know* that you have been "snared in the work of your own hands," till you make your bed in Hell.

And if such should be the issue of your opposition to the truth, the hand of the Lord will be seen in the execution of the judgment. For in suffering you to be snared and taken in the net which your own hands have spread, we discover a God who treats us at all times as free agents,—as capable of receiving or rejecting His offers of mercy. This free agency He will never violate. You may *contend with God*, and in so doing, you may be your own destroyer.

IV. Finally and briefly:—The judgments of the Lord are known by their not being *speedily* executed.

This rule of the Divine conduct would be suggested by the general descriptions with which the Bible is filled, of the character of God. We find Him everywhere mentioned as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow

to anger, and of great kindness. He is said, *not willingly to afflict*, as though even the chastisements which He sends upon His people for their sanctification and salvation, were reluctantly dispensed. And so, in regard to the wicked. And it is not because the Lord is indifferent to sin, that the sinner is suffered to go on in his wickedness from year to year,—but because He is long-suffering towards him, not willing that he should perish, but that he should come to repentance.

There is in this respect a consistency in the Divine administration, which it would be well to notice;—the application of a similar principle to the righteous and to the wicked. The people of God do not receive their *reward* at once, nor speedily. The established hopes and calm joys of the matured Christian, are the result of a long and trying process. In vain will they be sought for, in the *babe* in Christ: they are the ripened and vigorous fruit of many tears and prayers. But they *will* come at the last; and many a faithful believer has testified that it is good for a man that he both hope and patiently wait for the salvation of God.

And so, the judgments of God upon the wicked are not *speedily* executed. Compassion is exercised to the utmost limit of Divine forbearance. Rebuke after rebuke is given,—gently *and* severely. Blessings and afflictions, both make their appeal. The Spirit sometimes whispers in the heart, "*Come!*" and then again He rouses the conscience with guilty forebodings of the "wrath to come." And not till all the resources of Providence and Grace have been tried, and the sinner, hardened in rebellion, has rejected all, does God turn away, and leave him as a vessel fitted to destruction.

But the righteous *judgments* of God *will* come at the last, and not the less surely, nor the less heavily, because they have been deferred till the cup of wickedness is full. You may see them in the cold indifference which settles down upon the soul, that was once moved by the tenderness of a SAVIOUR'S love. You may see them in the sneer, and the scoff, and the angry unbelief of the man, whose conscience was once hopefully swayed by the terrors of the Lord. You may see them in that restless and determined hostility to the truth,—the most perfect type of the arch-fiend,—by which the abandoned soul strains every nerve to drag others with him to the pit of woe. These, however, are but the beginnings of sorrows. They are but the distant mutterings of the approaching storm; but they are sufficient, my fellow-sinner, to tell you that your judgment lingereth not,—that your damnation slumbereth not.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man *soweth*, that shall he also *reap*." And O, what a harvest for you, if you go into eternity, with a heart unreconciled to God, and with a conscience burdened with unforsaken, unforgiven sin!

Sermon 6.

THE BELIEVER AN HEIR.

TITUS III. 7.—"*That being justified freely by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*"

In these words, St. Paul briefly comprehends all the privileges of the believer's spiritual birth-right. To be justified,—to be pardoned freely by the grace of God, through faith in the Saviour's blood,—to be admitted into the family of God, cherished and protected as the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty,—to be proclaimed heirs of a blessed inheritance in heaven, yea, joint-heirs with the Son of God Himself,—these constitute the fulness of the Christian's hope, the true and enduring riches of the soul.

The last mentioned prerogative of the justified soul, —his being an "*heir* according to the hope of eternal life,"—will form the subject of our present reflections. That it occupied no small share of the Apostle's reflections, we gather from the emphatic manner in which he elsewhere refers to it. "If children," he says, "then *heirs*, heirs of God, and joint heirs with CHRIST." By

such expressions, St. Paul is plainly endeavoring to wake up the soul to a proper estimate of her sacred privilege. As though he had said,—If ye be indeed the children of God, then God should be loved as your Father and your Benefactor; if ye be heirs of the riches of His glory, an inheritance, brighter and better than anything the world can give, then ye should live in consistency with such hopes, and set your affections upon things above. Your manner of life should be that of those whose treasure is in heaven,—to whom the earth is but a place of pilgrimage,—whose home and happiness are in the skies.

In order to illustrate this point, it may be well to draw a lesson of wisdom from the children of this world. Let us see, then, what would be the natural conduct of an heir to an *earthly* inheritance.

First,—He would be anxious to secure the validity of his title.

Any doubt upon this point would not fail to disquiet him, and he would spare no effort to render his claim clear and indefeasible. His anxieties would be more particularly awakened, if he knew that enemies were standing ready to dispute his claim, and if possible, to defeat it. Frequently would his title-deeds be examined,—every passage and expression pondered with the deepest solicitude, and his fears would cease only with the assurance that his interests were safe,—that his hopes rested upon a good foundation. He would need no strong persuasion to adopt such a course. If his soul longed for the expected possession, the slightest cloud over his prospects would startle him into a becoming vigilance.

The application of these remarks is extremely obvious. God has set before us a glorious prize, one worthy of our efforts,—costly beyond all language,—enduring as eternity. The conditions of its possession are revealed so distinctly, that none can mistake them. Now shall they who claim an interest in that inheritance which CHRIST has provided for His people, be less solicitous about their title, than an heir to the corruptible treasures of the world? Shall they rest contented with the vague *hope* that heaven is theirs, without being able to assign a good reason for that hope? God has not abandoned the believer to a mere *wish* for eternal happiness. He has furnished him sufficient grounds for an enlightened, holy confidence that his sins are forgiven, and that hereafter he shall be presented faultless before the throne of the Father's glory. Else, how are we to understand St. Paul, when he exhorts us to make our calling and election sure? to persevere unto the attainment of the full assurance of hope? to draw near unto God in the full *assurance* of faith? In the near prospect of death, this Apostle himself exclaimed, "*I know* in whom I have believed." If this then be the Christian's privilege, to neglect it is to sin against the soul. This confidence will not, it is true, be the *immediate* fruit of the believer's faith. He may be subjected to distressing doubts. His sins may at times threaten to exclude him from the presence of God. But from this and all other evils, God has provided an ample refuge in the assurances of His Word. Is sin repented of, and forsaken, and never wilfully committed? Is it a painful thought that any remains of a corrupt nature still cleave to the soul, and is sincere repentance coupled

with a joyful reliance upon CHRIST as our Saviour? Is faith in the Saviour productive of works meet for repentance? Are the fruits of the Spirit living and growing within us? Does the love of CHRIST constrain us to the daily mortification of every unholy propensity? And when we have done all, is the sentiment of our hearts still, 'Lord! I am an unprofitable servant; still must I cleave for my hope of salvation, to Him whose blood cleanseth from all sin?' If so, then may we rejoice in the gracious promise, that such shall in no wise be cast out. Satan may accuse, a fearful heart may object, but the promise of God standeth sure,—"There is no condemnation to them which are in CHRIST JESUS." But if these indications of spiritual life are wanting,—if we are relying upon *past experiences*, to the neglect of present evidences, there is danger lest our hope be built upon the sand, and fail to sustain us in the hour when we shall need all the comfort which religion can give us. The danger is greater from the fact that there is such a thing as a *false* hope,—a hope which will vanish before the terrors of death, and the revelations of the judgment. Let us not leave our title to heaven in a painful uncertainty. If indeed heirs to that bright inheritance, let the estimation in which we hold it, be manifested by a constant diligence in securing and establishing our claim.

2. *An heir to an earthly inheritance would be careful lest it should receive any damage.*

He would not only guard it against every positive injury, but would be adding to its value, so that his possessions might be as large as possible at the time of his entering upon them.

Consistency demands that the heir of heavenly blessedness exhibit a similar conduct. The precepts of the Bible, and every example of holy living which it presents, impress upon us the important truth that "the life of God in the soul" is ever advancing in ripeness, and in strength. "*Lay up* for yourselves treasures in heaven;" i. e. not only secure *a title* to its rewards, but be ever adding to your store. And such should be the aim of every soul that has tasted of the good things of the world to come. Among the many purposes which God may have for continuing the believer on earth, we may reasonably conclude that growth in grace is one, and by no means the least important. It is a great thing indeed to be *born* of God,—from a child of wrath, to be made the child of His love, and an heir of future glory. It is a great thing to be fitted for the lowest seat in heaven; to speak, though it be with stammering lips, the praises of our REDEEMER. But the Scriptures encourage us to aim at still greater things; and *reason* leads us to conclude that the larger our supplies of grace *here*, the better prepared we shall be to praise God in heaven, and occupy a place nearer to the throne of His glory. *All* will indeed love, and praise, and minister before Him with an Angel's fervor, and an Angel's zeal. But as one star differeth from another star in glory, so is it among the principalities and the powers of heaven. Here then is a motive for exertion, which, if properly understood, may well call into action our holiest energies. Who would not dismiss the cumbering cares, the tempting pleasures, of the world, when Eternity unfolds her treasures, and God's all-animating voice calls us to so blessed an inheritance! Shall we

suffer the trifles of the passing hour or the graver anxieties of this fleeting life to stand between our souls, and such bright hopes in heaven? Rather let our prayer be, that God would give us juster views of what heaven is;—that He would impart larger measures of His Spirit,—a richer earnest of our future joys! Our course should be ever onward. There are heights and depths in the religion of the Gospel, which you have not yet explored. Much as you may have known of CHRIST and His love, there is a boundless ocean yet before you. His glories none can fathom,—His love cannot be told. Much as your heart may have exulted in the joys of redemption,—joys unutterable and greater still, may be yours. There is much yet to learn of Jesus in the fulness of His grace,—much of your need of His Almighty protection, His gracious intercession with the Father,—a deeper sense of your guilt and unworthiness, and of your obligations to the tender mercies of God. Count all things, then, but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS your Lord. Let your approaches be frequent to the mercy-seat, with the prayer that the Saviour may be revealed more and more, until the riches of your inheritance shall rise and expand before the eye of faith with irresistible attractions, and the world be trodden with contempt beneath your feet.

3. *An heir to an earthly inheritance would naturally be much occupied in meditating upon his future prospects.*

Often would he overleap the interval which stood between him and his possessions, and spend many a solitary hour in pleasing anticipation of the wealth which was to be his.

Such too will be the direction of *his* thoughts, whose choicest blessings are beyond the grave. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Nothing will so truly manifest a person's real character as his *secret thoughts*. It is in our hours of seclusion, when, removed from every external influence, the heart is left to its unchecked impulses, that the safest test is furnished for a judgment of ourselves. Emotions apparently of a sacred character may be awakened under the power of the truth, and because susceptible of such feelings upon extraordinary occasions, we may imagine that no reason exists for a rigid self-examination. But where are the fruits of such favored seasons? What becomes of these emotions when the occasion has passed away, and the world is revisited? Do they follow you to the closet? Do you *there* linger upon the sacred theme, and abandon it with reluctance? Ah! how soon do the unhallowed occupations of the world commence their desolations upon the heart, and remove almost every trace of the things which are unseen and eternal! The salutary operations of the SPIRIT are interrupted. The world and worldly things employ the anxious thoughts, and the soul, forgetful of her better portion, foregoes her highest and her purest joys. When the heart has thus become once more the seat of carnal hopes, they will necessarily give a coloring to our meditations, and be the companions of our midnight watches. Not so with the consistent heir of glory. There will doubtless be frequent occasion to mourn the influence of the world's fascinations, yet the prevailing current of his affections and his thoughts will be toward the place where CHRIST sitteth at the right hand of God,—

the many mansions in his Father's house. Such reflections will ever be welcome to the heir of heaven. They will mingle with his daily duties; and even amid scenes of noise and distraction, the soul will mount upon the wings of contemplation, and dwell in silent thought upon the peace of heaven. There is *no* assault the world can make, which will not drive him nearer to his final rest. If sorrow and the disappointment of early hope have taught us what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue, what will so sweetly silence complaint, and furnish a theme for unbounded joy, as a remembrance of the believer's heritage in the skies!—What more effectual antidote to grief, than to transfer ourselves to those realms where sorrow is unknown, and every tear shall be wiped away by the hand of God. And upon an heir of heaven, the empty *joys* of the world will produce a similar effect. The pleasures of a ransomed soul are such as the world knows not of; and to the mind and heart that have been once attuned to the song of redeeming love, the sounds of unholy mirth are but painful and harsh discord. Even amid such scenes, the *heir* of heaven will be quickly reminded of the *songs* of heaven, and will be deaf to all but those strains in which he shall hereafter join with the blood-bought multitude about the throne. But the best and happiest hours of the child of God, are when he has entered into his chamber, and has shut his doors about him, and the soul can rise above all that is worldly, and be alone with God,—when the truths of the Bible are felt in all the grandeur of their simplicity, unembarrassed by any unhallowed associations,—when he can realize the great objects of his hope, the blessed

promises of the Gospel. It is then that solemn extacies of feeling will steal over the spirit, and seasons of untold bliss impart true happiness to the heir of heaven. How little,—O how trifling does the world appear, when heaven thus opens to the view! What food for never-tiring reflection, for consoling thought, is here presented to the Christian! "God is then seen in more of His unveiled glories; CHRIST is then seen as our compassionate High Priest and Advocate with the Father; and the communion of the SPIRIT our Comforter and Sanctifier, subdues the soul into deep and reverential awe.

> "This,—this is the solemn feast of feeling,
> 'Tis the Sabbath of the soul."

My hearer,—if an heir of heaven, it is your hope to spend an eternity of such bliss,—to enjoy one unbroken, everlasting season of such communion with the TRIUNE GOD. It is your hope not only to behold, but to aspire after a resemblance to the glory of your Lord, till you shall yourself be changed into the same image, from glory to glory. Do you frequently meditate upon such destinies? Do your thoughts dwell upon them, till they have become familiar and influential realities? or do they float before the mind like dim and undefined shadows? Endeavor to gather larger foretastes of your inheritance. It will soothe your afflictions. It will augment your joys. It will enlarge your capacities for the occupations of the heavenly world.

Lastly; *The heir to an earthly inheritance, if influenced by proper feelings, would ever remember with gratitude his benefactor.*

When the children of Israel were about to be introduced into the promised land, Moses gave them a solemn injunction to beware lest, in the enjoyment of their blessings, they should forget *the Lord their God*, who brought them out of the house of bondage. The Church of the Redeemer needs this caution still. The soul of the believer has been delivered from a bondage far worse than that of God's ancient people. The liberty to which we have been redeemed,—our hopes, our joys, are but faintly typified by the blessings of Canaan. And what is still more to our purpose, the ransom of the *soul* is the result of a sacrifice more costly,—of blood more precious,—of sufferings which appeal to the tenderest sensibilities, and to the profoundest gratitude. *Our* Deliverer has *Himself* become our ransom. The stroke which might have deservedly fallen upon us, fell with unmeasured severity upon His spotless soul. *Our* smiles are the fruit of His *tears*. *Our* comforts spring from His bitter pains of body, and the sharper afflictions of a wounded spirit. Our *life* is the purchase of His agonies and death. Our hopes of a blessed immortality may be traced to that hour of dreadful anguish, when Jesus mourned the hidings of His Father's countenance. Our triumph over the grave will be due to Him who lay down amid its silence, and rose again for us, that they who sleep in Jesus might be partakers of His glorious resurrection. He has gone to heaven to intercede for our forgiveness and salvation; and there, his exhaustless love is preparing a place, my Christian brother, for the repose of your soul. "The Lamb that was slain" will be the burden of your song when you shall join the Church triumphant, in glory. It is

He Himself who will be the portion of the happy spirit. And shall we ever think of our inheritance, and forget Him, whose love bestows it upon us so freely? There is no blessing that we ask of our Father, which does not remind us of our need of CHRIST, and our debt of gratitude to Him. Do we plead that our sins may be blotted out, and that God would save us from deserved condemnation? It is in Jesus' name, and for Jesus' sake, that we ask it. Do we pray for the joys of salvation,—the blessed assurance of acceptance with the Father? Our prayer ascends again in the name of Jesus. Do we ask for protection amid temporal and spiritual dangers? Still it must be for the sake of Jesus. In the dark hour of death, do we, in trembling accents, send up the prayer of helplessness to Him who alone can give us help? Again, the name of Jesus lingers upon the dying lip. And if our prayers are answered, it is altogether for the sake of Him, who stands as our gracious Advocate with the Father. O then, in all our joys, let us remember Him, who hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,—who, by His death, hath opened unto us the gate of everlasting Life, and through whose all-sufficient grace and merits, we hope to enter upon the enjoyment of our eternal inheritance!

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Sermon 7.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

2 Cor. xiii. 5.—*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.*"

The power in every man, of turning his thoughts upon himself, and making his own character and endowments the subject of his contemplations, is among the most remarkable of all the attributes conferred upon him. No other, indeed, of all his wonderful capabilities is to be compared with it. Many of his other noble qualifications may distinguish him from the unreflecting brute, and bring him into alliance with the Angels, and even with God Himself; but the more we think of this strange power which he possesses, the more mysterious does it seem, and we are forced to exclaim with David, that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." The very possession of a faculty so mysterious and important in its operations, involves a responsibility correspondingly great. He who has bestowed it upon us, will call us to a strict account for its faithful exercise. The Sacred Writers not only recognize this power in man, but make their appeal to it, in the most solemn and impressive

manner. The Apostle urges the duty of self-examination upon the members of the Church at Corinth, previous to their approaching the Lord's Table; the occasion was the most solemn of any within the compass of the Christian's duties or privileges, and hence the solemnity of his appeal. In conformity with this view of its importance, let me ask your attention to *the manner* in which the duty should be performed, and *the benefits* resulting from its performance.

I. In discharging the duty before us, the Law of God should be *the rule or standard*, to guide us.

Nothing short of this will enable us to gain the objects of a self-examination. The rule which guides us must obviously be something *out of ourselves*. The *test* by which the quality of any substance is tried, must be something entirely *distinct* from that substance. Who would think of *proving* the purity of gold or silver, by simply comparing some of the grosser parts of the material, with those which appear more excellent? No man, interested in the result, would be satisfied with a decision built on such a process,—because it is the *whole* substance whose excellence is to be tested, and not simply a part. That which is in itself of questionable character, cannot, with any propriety or safety, be elevated into a standard, by which the character of any thing else is to be finally decided.

However plain the truth of this illustration may seem, it becomes important to insist upon it, from the mistake which is so often made on the subject in question. If the test by which our characters are to be tried, must be something out of, and distinct from, ourselves, then no rule of judgment, framed by our own wisdom, can be

received, or relied upon, as a safe guide in our attempts to obtain a knowledge of ourselves. *Our wisdom, our judgment*, are a part of *ourselves*, and themselves need to be guided and corrected by a higher wisdom,—the unchangeable decisions of Him, who alone is infallible. But inevitable as this conclusion may seem to be, when the subject is discussed with an unbiassed mind,—how many there are, hazarding their eternal salvation upon the verdict of their own partial judgments! An examination of your own character, my Hearer, is a solemn and essential duty; but beware of entering those dark chambers of imagery, under the guidance of a benighted judgment. *Selfishness* and *pride* are in league with every unholy passion to lead you astray amidst the blinding mazes of the human heart, which none but God can understand.

If the *individual* judgment, unguided by the Spirit and the Law of God, cannot be trusted in the important work of self-examination, no more can the collected wisdom of the world. The same arguments, substantially, which establish the first branch of this proposition, are of force in establishing the last. For what *is* the collected wisdom of the world? What are the rules, the maxims, the prevailing decisions of a community, or of a nation, or of mankind united, but a code of morality resulting from the combination of individual judgments? It matters not how high in the scale of intelligence, many of these individuals may stand, nor how great or salutary the influence which their counsels may exert in mere worldly matters; their sentiments can be no guide for us, when the question becomes one of infinitely more solemn concernment,—when the condition, and the

destinies, of an immortal soul, are the points to be examined and decided. Here again, the complacency of many leads them astray, when a little reflection and honest dealing would convince them of a fatal error. Worldly maxims must invariably coincide with the prevailing dispositions of worldly minds. Their very basis is the false suggestions of an unsanctified heart, and the whole system and superstructure must necessarily be composed of similar materials. And hence it is that many who are led to reject the pure requirements of God's Law, and who perhaps have not sufficient mental discipline to form independent opinions of their own, are governed by the customs of the society in which they live,—by the dogmatic decisions of some leading mind, or by the current notions which the majority of a fallen world has sanctioned. *These* are the lights with which they venture to penetrate the dark recesses of a depraved heart. When a voice from the eternal world wakes them up to a consciousness of something wrong within, instead of listening, as they should do, to the faithful teachings of that voice, they are soothed into a false security, by the flattering announcements of a world that is at enmity with God. Self examination conducted by so false a standard, must necessarily lead to false conclusions, and to final ruin. The wisdom of the world, even its *purest* form of morality, must fail of reaching the unfathomable depths of our spiritual nature, or of ministering to the wants of our spiritual poverty. It speaks peace, just when we need the alarming tones of a holier and truer guide, and leads the soul in her most fearful emergency, to shelter herself under a spurious hope,—the wretched counterfeit of religion.

The way is now prepared to insist more directly upon our original proposition, that the Law of God, and that alone, must be the standard, by which the examination of one's self is to be conducted. This alone fulfils all the conditions of a proper test of human character. It comes from *God*, and not from man. It is a standard of judgment, independent entirely of the creature. In its origin and structure,—in its requirements and sanctions, it is not indebted in the least to human wisdom. It lies, in all its characteristics, *out of ourselves:* and when we approach it, we are conscious of standing in the presence of superior majesty. It speaks a language so strange to the ear of fallen man, so perfectly aside from all the sympathies of his depraved nature, that he will either yield to its teachings and reproofs, as to a master and reformer, or will rise in wicked rebellion against it, as his worst enemy. It has no flattery for the pride and self-esteem of the sinner; no indulgence for his frailties; not a word upon which he can build a hope, short of its own pure and holy requirements. The Law of God is the transcript of the *character* of God. Whilst it tells us what we should be, it tells us also what *God is*. In the light of its unspotted holiness, the sinner will see, without any disguise, his own impurity. In the justness of its demands, he will see his fearful exposure to the righteous indignation of his Judge. In the *extent* of its claims, he will learn his utter weakness,—how *helpless*, as well as guilty, he lies in the hands of his Sovereign God. And as a full discovery of his character is thus made, the awful sentence of condemnation, whilst it falls with destructive force upon his proud hopes, will be confessed to be no more

than his sins deserve. Beloved, if you are truly in earnest in the work of self-examination, you will not shrink from such a test as this. You will not trust to the lying judgments of any created wisdom, but bring your heart into the presence of a pure and omniscient God, and submit to the searching scrutiny of His Law.

2. Self-examination should be *thorough*.

And here lies the main difficulty,—that of inducing the sinner to begin the important business of trying himself by a holy test, and prosecute it, at the expense of all that is dear to self-love, and the pride of a carnal heart. The cost must be fully counted, and a resolution formed, in the Lord's strength, that the wisdom of God shall triumph over our weak and partial decisions, and that every fond and secret lust shall be brought from its hiding-place, and sacrificed to the demands of Infinite Holiness.

When the young Ruler in the Gospel came to Jesus with the earnest inquiry, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" we have no reason to doubt that he desired to be saved, and that his desire amounted to a degree of anxiety. So great indeed was his eagerness, that he came *running* to Jesus, asking, with much solicitude, what the Law could require of him, beyond what he had already done. He was apparently willing to abide by the decisions of God's Law. Here, one might suppose, was a fair candidate for heaven, who would gladly seize upon the instructions of CHRIST, and relinquish all that he possessed, that he might secure "the pearl of great price." But the further revelations of the Saviour disclosed terms, with which the young man found it difficult to comply, and the work of salva-

tion was abandoned. This instance of a soul shrinking from a faithful exhibition of the Divine requirements, is not, we fear, a solitary one. In self-examination, it is the danger to which we are peculiarly exposed, and from which nothing but the grace of God can shield us. Like the young Ruler, many will approve of, and submit to, the Law, so long as it crosses no darling passion. That Law is broad,—piercing even to the discernment of the thoughts and intents of the heart; it stops not at the decency of outward deportment. It will cast its clear light upon all the hidden *motives* of conduct, and expose their selfishness. It demands that *every* lust shall be given up; and so long as anything remains to flatter native pride, it will speak nothing but the language of rebuke and condemnation. If the sinner attempts to adulterate, or explain away, the simple and forcible precepts of God's Law,—if he refuses to look at the darkest features of his character, as drawn by the very finger of God, so far from reaping any benefit from self-examination, it would have been better perhaps that he had not commenced the scrutiny. Such disingenuous dealings with the law, instead of leading you to CHRIST, and the consolations of His Gospel, will leave you to the shelter of a fancied goodness of your own, and scourge you in the hour of peril with guilty fears, and the sting of an outraged conscience. O if it be a solemn duty to bring every open sin and secret fault to the adjudications of the Divine Law, and to bend unreservedly to the justice of all its decisions, it must be a fearful thing to perform but half the duty. It is trifling with God, and with the everlasting peace of the soul. It is turning His truth into a lie, and provoking Him to

leave us to a wilful blindness,—to a confirmed impenitence. For what greater provocation can be offered, than to yield, where our convenience is not disturbed, our taste is not offended, or the pride of self-will is not touched,—but, just at the point where *self-denial* is required, to hug our darling lusts, and close the ear against the warnings of the Searcher of all hearts?

3. Self-examination must be *frequent.*

The reasons for this direction may be found in the nature of the work to be done. It is not like some external duties, which, when once performed, are not necessarily to be repeated. It calls us to deal with the *springs* of action,—to grapple with the fugitive thoughts and impulses of a deceitful heart: and therefore demands not only earnestness and vigilance, but a frequent return to the duty, until our earthly warfare shall be accomplished. In the commencement of this discourse, we spoke of the mysterious nature of the power which we possess, of making *ourselves* the distinct object of contemplation. No less mysterious does it appear in all the *details* of its operation. We have not only the power of *examining* ourselves, but we may *deceive* ourselves; yea, far more truly and effectually, than we can succeed in deceiving others. If the power of self-examination, when honestly exercised, enables us to penetrate deeper into the heart, than can any other eye but God's, it also exposes us, when imperfectly or dishonestly performed, to a delusion, which the victim thereof is the last to detect and own. When the Prophet speaks of the *deceitfulness of the heart,* he utters no figurative language, but a *literal* and melancholy truth, dictated by the Spirit of Him, who knows us better than

we know ourselves. For this, if for no other reason, it is evident that the duty of self-inspection must be frequently performed. Let us not be surprised to find that the same ground must be travelled over again,—the same wound probed again,—the same lusts chastised again. The treacherous calm of the mind must be disturbed by a frequent renewal of the spiritual conflict, if we would escape the shame, and the doom, of the self-deceiver. O let us remember that in this work, we are toiling for an object. Let no disappointments discourage us: let no self-love defraud us of that object. The heart *must* be sanctified and cleansed, before it can be a temple meet for the residence of God's SPIRIT. With untiring diligence, prepare it for the reception of this heavenly Visitant; provoke Him not, by your neglect, to leave you to the unsubdued power of your corruptions!

Lastly:—the duty must be performed with earnest prayer for the light and power of the Holy Spirit.

Our utmost diligence will be unrewarded with success, unless the SPIRIT enlighten us to understand His own truth. What though it be the everlasting truth of God; what though it be uttered in the simplest of all language; what though it fall upon the ear, at one time, in terms of the most tender persuasion, and again, in tones of startling denunciation, it will yet fail of being effectual, unless the judgment be guided by Him, who alone can lead us into all truth. *His* light must shine into our darkened understandings, and give life and meaning to the letter of the Divine Word, or the very wisdom of God will be foolishness unto us. And when the soul turns in upon herself, and goes down into the dark and loathsome abodes of her own corruptions, then

especially will she need the influences of this heavenly Agent. Without these influences, her love for her own will lead her to put darkness for light, and to call evil good. The very sins which God condemns will either be justified as virtues, or their existence denied; and that polluted nature, which, in the judgment of God, needs to be renewed and sanctified, will be regarded as needing no change; nay, will be elevated in his own esteem, in all that is virtuous and honorable and noble. Unless the Spirit's wisdom guide you, and the Spirit's influences govern you, the beneficial purposes of self-examination will be utterly defeated; for instead of being conducted to the salutary conclusion that you are poor and blind and naked, the Prince of darkness will lead you captive with the fancy, that you are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.

We now pass to the *second* branch of our subject, viz., the *benefits* arising from self-examination.

1. The immediate benefit resulting from the faithful discharge of this duty, will be the *knowledge of* ourselves.

It is the want of a proper self-knowledge,—an overestimate of ourselves, which destroys the harmony between the soul and God, and which, if not corrected in time, must forever exclude us from the peace of heaven. Human pride and self-love can have no sympathy with the lowliness of those spirits, who bow in unspeakable humility and self-abasement before the brightness of Jehovah's glory. The corruptions of the human heart must be discovered, and acknowledged, and cleansed by the grace of a compassionate God, for they will minister no happiness to the soul in that world, where all

is pure, and holy, and humble. And this indispensable knowledge of ourselves will never be obtained, so long as the duty of self-examination is neglected. From the *faithful* discharge of this duty alone, directed and blessed by the Spirit of God, will the soul ever learn to judge rightly of herself, and of the character and requirements of Him, before whose tribunal we must appear at last.

2. A self-examination, such as we have described, will lead the sinner to a glad acceptance of the Lord Jesus as his Saviour.

The reason why CHRIST and His service is so extensively rejected, is that men do not feel their *need* of Him; and this insensibility to their greatest want, springs from an ignorance of themselves. As long as they can discern any fancied goodness in themselves, it will serve to encourage self-dependence, and close the door of the heart against the Saviour's grace and love.

Now it is the precise office of the Law, as a schoolmaster, to lead us unto CHRIST; and this blessed result is accomplished, by making the sinner feel his own guilt and pollution, that he may take Jesus as his Righteousness:—by making him feel his weakness, that CHRIST may be his strength;—by making him feel his utter emptiness of all qualification for God's favor and the blessedness of heaven, that he may receive of the fulness of the Saviour's grace. Examine yourself thoroughly and frequently by the piercing light of God's Law; it is holy, just, and true. It cannot deceive you: and whilst it leads you to a true estimate of yourself, it will also lead you to see the worth and the glory of the Son of God. Its discipline may be painful and humbling;

it will pour contempt upon all your pretensions, and beat down every proud thought, and lay you helpless and condemned before the tribunal of a righteous God. But O, it is just here, and here alone, that instead of the curses of the Law, you will hear the still small voice of the Spirit, pointing you, in the language of comfort and of love, to the Lamb of God. It is here, and here alone, that the Saviour will meet you with His great and precious promises of forgiveness and salvation. It is here that the gracious Redeemer will take you by the hand, and lift you from the dust, and fill you with all joy and peace in believing. When CHRIST comes to the soul, He comes not to call the *righteous*, but the sinner, to repentance. The proud he will ever regard afar off; but the hearts of the contrite and lowly ones are His chosen abode. Better, far better, to be thus led through the paths of a godly sorrow, to the source of all spiritual comfort, than to be overwhelmed at last by the *eternal* curses of a righteous Law, when there shall be no advocate to plead for you, and the door of promise, and of hope, shall be forever closed.

Examine yourselves, lest a false hope deceive you; and when the winds and the waves of tribulation and anguish beat upon your soul, you find, when too late, that, instead of the Rock of Ages, you have built upon a foundation of sand.

Sermon 8.

FORSAKE ALL FOR CHRIST.

St. Luke xiv. 33.—"*So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.*"

The text reminds us of a peculiarity in the religion of Christ, viz: that He never attempted to gain proselytes, by holding out false inducements, or by disguising the terms of discipleship. He never allured any to a service, of whose hardships and difficulties they might afterwards complain,—by concealing any portion of the truth, or by mitigating the terms of salvation. Had He been so disposed, He could have drawn around Him crowds of devoted admirers. But this formed no part of His design. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. True to His purpose, and like a faithful physician of the soul, He neglected no means for the accomplishment of an enterprise, so benevolent and so important. He carefully told His followers what sacrifices they must make, and what obstacles they must encounter. When one said unto Him, "Lord! I will follow Thee, whithersoever Thou goest," Jesus replied,

"The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." As if He had said, 'Be not hasty in thy words: count well the cost of identifying thyself with such a Master.' So too, when James and John sought for exalted stations in CHRIST'S kingdom, the Saviour told them they could not be aware of the nature of such a request. "Can ye drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" By such a question, He meant to teach them and us, that eminence in the Christian life was to be attained through eminent hardships,—many struggles with the powers of darkness, and indwelling corruption; and that the nearer we would get to CHRIST, the greater must be the conflict. Of a similar nature is the declaration of the text,—"Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not *all* that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."

There are many, perhaps, who have read this text of Scripture, and have turned from it, as some of the early followers of CHRIST did from Him, with the reply, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" There is nothing in it which furnishes a basis for a compromise. It presents no alternative to the half-hearted inquirer, other than a total abandonment of *all* for CHRIST, or, a decided rejection of the terms of salvation. There is a *wisdom*, as well as mercy, in this; for the human heart is ever seeking some way in which God and the world may *both* be served. It is not always easy to persuade men that God means just what He says, and *all* that He says; and hence the duties of our religion are laid down in all their absoluteness and positiveness. We find but very little, if anything, in the Bible, that would

check an excessive devotion;—that being a fault, to which we are by no means liable. But its pages are crowded with precepts and admonitions, expressly intended to stimulate us to an entire consecration of ourselves and ours, unto the Redeemer, who has purchased us with His own blood. Such a course is plainly pointed out by the text. It contains no reservations or limitations. *Everything* is to be left for CHRIST. He asks for *all*, or nothing.

We propose to place before you the nature of this demand, and one or two arguments for its perfect reasonableness.

1. All our means of usefulness are to be consecrated to the promotion of the Saviour's glory.

It matters not in what these means consist,—whether it be money, time, opportunities, or talents,—all are to be devoted to the one great purpose, of glorifying the Redeemer. This is to be the ultimate object of every act,—the basis of every plan. And let us not be charged with extravagance, in thus extending the obligations of the Christian over every purpose of his life. To whom are we indebted for life itself, and its constant preservation, and for all the inferior comforts which filled up the days of our impenitence? CHRIST watched over the hours of our helpless infancy. He was about our bed and about our path, and threw over us the shield of His love, whilst living in forgetfulness of God, and indulging in the pleasures of sin. It was because CHRIST had died, and had risen again, and stood as our Intercessor at the throne of mercy, that our day of grace has been prolonged, and every want supplied. All that we have is the purchase of CHRIST'S sufferings

and death. The numberless comforts of life are no unimportant part of our redemption. And we are bound to use them all in making known the kindness and love of the great God our Saviour.

Every one, Brethren, has his object in life,—the great end for which he toils. But how various are these! How little of harmony is there in the movements of this living world! How often do the creatures of God cross each other's path in the pursuit of their separate designs! How little of the spirit of CHRIST appears in their actions! How little of the *glory* of CHRIST forms any part of their aims! It is the design of the religion of Jesus to *correct* such disorder; and it can only be done by uniting the human family in one great effort to exalt the Redeemer in the earth, until His glory shall spread from pole to pole, and from the rising to the setting sun.

2. We are to abandon every source of *pleasure* for CHRIST.

We know that this will sound singular, and, to many, incomprehensible. They, who are accustomed to resort to the polluted fountains of the world for enjoyment, can know nothing of the pure and rich delight which flows from communion with CHRIST. It is a joy with which a stranger intermeddleth not,—which finds its source in the throne of God and the Lamb, far above the contaminations of this sinful world. If the heart ever swells with emotions of satisfaction, it should be in contemplating the wonderful achievements of Redeeming love. If satisfaction ever rises into rapture, it should be when celebrating the praises of Him who hath loved us. There is something in the love of CHRIST, so dis-

interested,—so unearthly,—so pure, that it is a strange thing, when the soul which has once tasted of His mercies, ever thinks of deserting Him. If the heart be depressed with sorrow,—if disappointment extinguish your fondest hopes, and you are constrained in the bitterness of your soul, to cry, "Who will shew us any good?" go not to a flattering world for comfort; but let the eye of faith be lifted still to CHRIST. The comfort which He imparts is a balm sufficient for every wound. If the world present her seductions, and prosperity and abundance are yours, let not *these* separate you from the *love of* CHRIST. *Receive* them; but enjoy them *as the gifts of* CHRIST. Try to discern His compassion in the greatest, and in the smallest, of your earthly blessings,—lest your affections be distracted, and He curse your blessings, and send upon you the rod of His chastisements.

And so too, with the soul that is seeking for a hope in CHRIST. You will never find it, my Hearer, if you approach Him with a divided heart. The world must be resolutely renounced, and the heart cleansed from every inordinate worldly affection, before it can be a mansion fit for the indwelling of the Saviour. If you wish for His smile, and an assurance of His love, that love must be valued above every thing else. CHRIST must *reign* in your heart, as well as dwell in it; and He will have no competitor. There is but *one* Saviour.

3. We must abandon every other ground of dependence for our hope of heaven, save the *merits* of CHRIST.

Easy as this may seem to some, who are satisfied with regarding simply the *theory* of Christian faith, it is, indeed, the most difficult of all the practical rules of our

religion. It is one thing to admit this doctrine into our creed, and admire its consistency in the plan of salvation, and quite another to have the heart brought under its controlling and sanctifying power. It is one thing to look at it, from a distance, as we would gaze at some feature in a beautiful landscape, and quite another, to realize it, as the corner-stone, upon which we are to build our spiritual hopes. It is only when this principle becomes *a practical rule of life*, that it can be of any benefit to the soul. A dependence upon the merits of the Saviour,—a full and unqualified faith in the sufficiency of His atoning sacrifice, is the very last act of the reluctant soul in becoming reconciled to God. None will ever know the difficulty of thus submitting to the righteousness of God, until the soul is brought to tremble for her safety, as exposed to the wrath of God. Never will such a dependence be valued, as it should be, until, under a conviction of sin's defiling and condemning power, we are constrained to flee, as an humble supplicant, to Jesus. Salvation by His blood! O it is a new thought to the soul, mourning under an oppressive sense of guilt. As the idea first dawns upon the spiritual understanding, it comes like the cooling breeze of heaven over a parched and burning desert. None can tell but those who have experienced its blessedness, how precious the Redeemer is to the *believing* soul,—what a holy calm and peace are shed over every faculty, as she casts herself implicitly and entirely upon CHRIST, and goes up through this wilderness of sin, leaning upon the arm of her Beloved. When, therefore, we ask you to "forsake all" for CHRIST, by abandoning every other dependence for your hope of heaven,

we are exhorting you to no easy task. A true sense of guilt, if left to its own workings, will drive the soul anywhere than to God the Saviour. The soul will cling to any other hope, until the omnipotent grace of God enables her to see the beauty, the fitness, and the necessity, of CHRIST. Then, and not till then, shall we know the luxury of that "good hope through grace," which anchors the soul steadfastly upon the promises of God.

But the warfare is not accomplished, in this *first* act of faith on the part of the believer. It is but just begun. Daily has he reason to pray, "Lord! increase my faith!" The more he becomes acquainted with the sins of his heart, the stronger will be his convictions of guilt,—the deeper will be his repentance. Then it is, that Satan, and an unbelieving heart step in, and tempt him to doubt the *sufficiency of* CHRIST to save such a sinner as he is. The struggle with the "Accuser" is again renewed, until a stronger and a living faith once more rises, triumphant over all, and CHRIST is again received as the sinner's *sole dependence.* Repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus CHRIST, is the lesson which the believer will be ever learning until faith is swallowed up in sight. It is a painful conflict to the Christian. It is a part of that tribulation through which he is to pass on his way to heaven. But is a *purifying* process; every victory of this kind makes CHRIST *more precious,*—convinces us more and more, of the necessity of forsaking all other dependence, for CHRIST. My Christian brother! this is the work to which you are exhorted, as a true disciple of the Redeemer. Look to God, in the hour of darkness and of doubt, for strength to tell your great accuser, "Jesus

shed His blood for me!" Forsake *all* for CHRIST; and let the thought, that it is your privilege so to do, kindle within you a fervent affection, and move you to a devoted service. Nothing else can sustain the soul in the storms of life. It will be your sole reliance on the bed of death. CHRIST will be the theme of your song forever. Eternity cannot exhaust the theme.

II. We proceed, in the second place, to state one or two arguments for the *reasonableness* of our Saviour's requirement.

1. The first and most obvious of these is, that CHRIST *left all for us.*

Here, however, not only language, but even our conceptions, fail us, when we attempt to speak of the matchless condescension of the Redeemer. The Inspired writers themselves do not dilate upon so astonishing an instance of the love of God. "*So* God loved the world," says St. John, "that He gave His only-begotten Son!" And St. Paul, in view of the same subject, exclaims, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" O my Brethren, we must first know what it is, to be surrounded from all eternity, with the splendors of unspotted holiness,—to be the object of praise and homage from that unnumbered host, whose "*Trisagion*" rests not day and night! We must be able to compass the fulness of Jehovah's happiness, before we can tell all which the Saviour left for us. But He hesitated not to leave those abodes of peace, to tabernacle in this world of blasphemies. He came to give us the saving knowledge of the *Truth;* but His voice fell upon ears that would not listen to in-

struction, and hearts that had grown hard in sin. How truly was He "a man of sorrows!" A manger was the birth-place of our Redeemer. His was an humble and laborious life, which attracted not the regards of the great, the wise, and the noble of the earth; and a death, attended with every mark of infamy, closed the protracted sufferings of our atoning Lord. There was no depth of humiliation to which He did not stoop. *He forsook all.*

Examine the life of CHRIST. Is it grateful to the heart to have kind acts acknowledged, and warm affections returned? Is ingratitude universally branded as the basest of crimes? CHRIST found but *few*, among those for whom He toiled and wept, who came to thank Him for His love. Is companionship a delightful solace amid the cares of life? Jesus was much alone, and almost always in the hour of His deepest grief. Are the sympathy and fidelity of friends,—especially when those friends are few,—richly prized by the unfortunate and the oppressed? Jesus had a little band of followers,—His only *professed* followers,—and *one*, who lay in His bosom. But in the hour of His trial, "they *all* forsook Him and fled." Is self-respect a natural, and one of the strongest feelings of the mind? Do we instinctively resent any indignity inflicted upon our person? O, it is enough to bring the blood of shame to the cheek, as we read of the insults offered to the Son of God in the judgment-hall of Pilate. To be scourged and buffetted and *spit* upon! None but the meek and lowly Jesus could have borne it. Death, too, is a trial, even to a good man. But the death of a *slave*,—a *malefactor*,—a death of lingering torture, and the soul

overwhelmed with her *own* afflictions,—this was the cup of bitterness which Jesus drained *for us*.

Is it strange that in return for such love, CHRIST should demand a similar devotion in His disciples? Is there any earthly object to which the heart will cling, when the Saviour pleads for a place in that heart? What is it that He asks you to leave? A few perishing trifles of the world,—purposes and plans which must die with your parting breath,—pleasures which never satisfy, and which often cannot be remembered but with regret. True,—in return for these, He offers you a life of conflict, but still a life of pleasure, for you will be contending for your crown. He offers you a life of penitence, but still a life of dependence and of faith, which will bring the glories of the invisible world around you. He offers you the blessings of a calm and peaceful conscience,—a tranquil, if not triumphant death, and a treasure in the heavens, which He will not ask you to forsake.

2. The demand of CHRIST is reasonable, because of the utter contrariety between the things of the world, and the things of God.

We cannot love the world, and love CHRIST too. The Bible speaks so plainly on this point, that it would seem superfluous to press the point by argument. There are many things, indeed, which the follower of CHRIST may enjoy, in common with all his fellow-creatures. Religion does not demand the sacrifice of our social affections, neither does it abrogate the law of kindness, of affability,—of courtesy to all. But it *does* require that in mingling with the world, we should carry the spirit of CHRIST with us, and indulge in nothing, of which we

should be ashamed to tell our Saviour, when kneeling at His feet in prayer. It does require that we should shun those places and occupations, which we cannot consistently connect in our reflections, with the great subject of our redemption by the blood of Jesus. On this subject, a warm heart and a tender conscience are by far the safest guides. CHRIST has left much, very much, of the *details* of the Christian's life, to the *honesty* of the Christian's conscience. "Judge therefore *yourselves*, Brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord." If your mind is constantly revolving the question,—"How far may I indulge in the world, and yet escape pollution?" —surely, your heart cannot be *whole* with God. O it is safer to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, and "forsake *all*," lest your dallying with doubtful pleasures send leanness into your soul, and dim your hope of heaven. There *is* a line, which you cannot pass, without entering the territories of sin. But CHRIST has not told you where that line is. The Bible has not legislated for the time-serving, the calculating, the lukewarm. It is *enough* for the soul panting after holiness and communion with God, to be told in general terms, that the world is his foe,—that there is a deadly malice beneath her smile; and he would rather deny himself a *hundred* lawful gratifications, than be guilty of *one* act that would offend his Saviour. There is then,—we repeat it,—an utter contrariety between the things of the world and the things of God. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." Both of them cannot be your masters. Have you not found this to be true, and been forced to confess it with an aching heart? When you have insensibly become entangled in the concerns

of the world, have you not found it difficult to perform your *religious* duties with your former satisfaction? Whence is it, in such cases, that CHRIST is so little in the thoughts, and so seldom on the lips? Whence is it, that to obtain a clear view of your inheritance above, you have to struggle so hard with a flood of trifling and ungodly emotions? Whence is it, that before you can recover the singleness of your affections, and an elevated spirituality of mind, you must resolutely retire from the world, and enter into your chamber, and shut the doors about you? Do you need any other than this *practical* argument, to convince you that you are travelling upon enchanted ground? that you need to be constantly on your guard against the snares of Satan? and that you cannot lay aside your armor, until you pass the threshold of the world to come? "Love not the world, nor the things of the world." "If ye be risen with CHRIST, set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Forsake *all* for CHRIST, and thus show that you are His disciple, and be able to say to your Master, who looketh upon the heart, "Lord! Thou knowest all things,—Thou knowest that I love Thee."

3. Our last argument is, that the Christian will be abundantly rewarded for all that he may forsake.

He will be a gainer an hundred fold *here;* and hereafter the full bliss of eternity will be his imperishable reward. He has, indeed, his hours of sadness; but he has joys, too, deeper and purer than the world can ever give. There are seasons when his Saviour draws near, and gives him ample experiences of His love,—when He condescends to hold intimate communion with the soul, and imparts larger earnests of that inheritanec, which

He will hereafter bestow in all its completeness. The more we disencumber ourselves of the world, its pleasures, its interests, and its cares, the nearer will be the Saviour's approach, and the sweeter and fuller will be our foretaste of heavenly bliss.

And who, my Brethren, will venture to speak of those things which eye hath not seen, which ear hath not heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man, but which God hath prepared for them that love Him! Rich as are the Christian's enjoyments here, they are poor when compared with the perfect bliss of heaven. Priceless as are his moments of communion with Jesus here, they are not to be compared with that moment, which shall find him seated at his Lord's feet in glory, joining in the everlasting doxology of ransomed spirits. Then indeed will commence his full reward,—never ending, and always increasing; the glories of heaven expanding more and more upon his view,—CHRIST more precious,—God more glorious,—the joys of salvation more satisfying. And when countless ages have rolled away, his will be the luxury of the thought, that his eternity still stretches on, boundless in extent, exhaustless in its resources of untold happiness!

These, Brethren, are but a faint representation of the believer's privileges. Are they not worth all, and more than all, that the world can give? Surely there is something here, for which the soul may well bid adieu to the transient gratifications of this life. And it is no *uncertain* heritage. The covenant is well-ordered and sure. God's word is pledged, that He will give all, and more than all, that has been mentioned, to those who seek their happiness in Him. "Come ye out from

among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Sermon 9.

NEITHER CLEAR NOR DARK.

ZECHARIAH XIV. 6, 7.—"*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark; but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.*"

Whatever obscurity may rest upon the Prophetic Scriptures, the observant and thoughtful believer may gather from the greater portion of them a light and meaning, sufficient for his guidance and instruction. Especially is this true, since CHRIST, the Sun of Righteousness, has arisen to illumine our darkness, fulfiling, in His own person and kingdom, all that the Prophets were inspired to foretell, and imparting clearness and beauty to that which had otherwise remained dark and perplexing. The text is one of those passages of Holy Scripture, of which it would be difficult to give a satisfactory interpretation, were it not for the aid which we derive from its partial fulfilment. This is true of almost all those prophetic utterances, which speak of a coming Saviour;—they are sufficiently plain to sustain hope and give energy to faith,—and yet so obscure as to keep the

people of God in humble waiting upon Him for direction in the path of Divine Knowledge. Let us examine the text thus in the light of a past history;—we shall find in so doing, that what is already accomplished is remarkably significant and clear, and that what is yet to come to pass, may be known with sufficient distinctness to awaken the Christian's joyful and triumphant expectations. It is evident, from the connection of the passage before us, with the rest of the chapter, that it is intended to describe the days of the Messiah. It will be our endeavor, in the following discourse, to point out a few particulars, in illustration of its meaning, and to direct your attention to a day still distant, when the glory, of which it so obscurely speaks, shall break upon the world in its full and enduring splendor.

"In *that* day"—i. e., the day when CHRIST shall appear as the Deliverer and King of His people, "the light shall not be clear nor dark."

1. We find this illustrated, in the first instance, in the *person of the Saviour* Himself.

From His birth in the manger at Bethlehem, to the moment when He shed His blood upon the Cross, there was a mystery involving the person and acts of the Redeemer, impenetrable, except by a spiritual faith and discernment. The manifestations of His character were such as to excite, at one time, the wonder and the fear, and at others, the bitter enmity of those who hated Him and His pretensions;—and not unfrequently to create perplexity in the minds of His faithful and loving disciples. To the short-sightedness of unbelief and spiritual ignorance, these manifestations appeared like contradictions;—and to the imperfectly instructed minds

of His followers, the precepts and conduct of the Saviour were often hard to be understood. It was the mingling of light and darkness,—neither perfectly clear, nor perfectly dark;—neither night, nor day. On that glad morning, when the world was called to rejoice in the Advent of the Son of God to our world, a choir of angels announced the gracious tidings, that the long promised Saviour,—the Deliverer of man from sin and death, was come. A fit retinue this, we think, to attend upon the Son of the Highest,—the Mighty God,—the King of glory. But we follow the Shepherds from the plains of Bethlehem, to the place where Jesus was born, —and there, instead of being surrounded with the glories of the upper world, or even with the comforts of this, we find Him, to all appearance, a helpless babe,—like any of the little ones of our dying race,—ushered into the world in the midst of the direst poverty,—with no place in which to rest His head, save the cold and cheerless manger. Can this be indeed He, of whom the *angels* spake? Is this the Lord of glory? He, to whose right arm we are to trust, for victory, and salvation from the powers of Hell? He, whom angels worship,—the Maker of all worlds,—upon whose shoulders universal government is to rest? Yes, it is He, "God manifest in the flesh." But oh! how strange must such a scene as this have appeared to those who witnessed it! How wonderful the contrast between the Hosannas, with which the glad tidings of His birth were announced, and the humiliating circumstances in which they found the Holy Child Jesus, swathed and cradled amidst the beasts of the stall! Had it not been for the Divine directions, which led them thither, surely the

shepherds never would have bent their steps to so humble an abode, or dreamed of finding the Redeemer of the world amidst such poverty and shame. Now in all this, how great must have been the obscurity of the Divine procedure, except to those who were much enlightened with wisdom from on high. But obscure as it was, it was not utter darkness;—it was neither day, nor night. The throng of angels, with their hymns of praise, ascribing glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men,—what was this, but an intimation of the Divine nature of Him, of whom they sung? And the scene of the manger of Bethlehem, the poverty and apparent weakness and dishonor, in which the Son of God was brought into the world;—what was this, on the other hand, but a manifest exhibition of His manhood; Two truths here stood forth;—His Divinity and His humanity; But the light in which they were exhibited, was not so clear, as to lead men to see at once, that here was indeed the great mystery of godliness. So stupendous a thought as this, so worthy of the Divine mind, but so impossible to be comprehended by a finite creature, the world was not yet prepared to grasp in all its fulness. They saw it, as yet, only in the doubtful light of a new-born truth. The light shined in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not.

As the Saviour grew up to manhood, and prosecuted the work of Redemption, we find manifold illustrations of the same truth. At one time, we see the Saviour speaking and acting, with all the prerogatives of the Godhead,—healing the sick with a word,—stilling the raging tempest by His mere command,—imparting peace and forgiveness of sins to the sinner's troubled con-

science,—calling the silent dead from their graves. Here was a work, evidently, which none, but one possessed of Divine power, could perform. The Divinity, here again displayed itself, in characters, which, when alone considered, cannot well be mistaken. The tokens of the Godhead, it would seem to us, were sufficiently plain in these miracles of His power and mercy to silence the skepticism of unbelief, and extort the Hosannas of the multitude. But consider again;—they saw before them, one, who, to all appearance, was but a man,—a man, too, in the very humblest station in society;—one, who, though performing works which none but God could do,—yet suffered, hungered, thirsted, wept. That word of command, which raised the dead to life,—which stilled the heaving billows, and spake comfort to the wounded conscience, proceeded from the lips of one, who was born at Bethlehem;—was subject, in childhood, to his parents at Nazareth, and had grown up to man's estate, like any one among his friends and neighbors. How dim, then, was the light in which they were called to contemplate the great doctrine of our faith,—Jesus,—the Son of God, and yet the Son of man. His works of power declared Him clearly to be God. Here indeed was a blaze of unmingled light;—but then came the dark and perplexing cloud over their faithless minds; "Is not this Jesus—the son of Joseph, whose brethren we know? and his sisters, are they not with us?" His claims to be God, and the clear evidence that He was a man, seemed to conflict together, and contradict each other. We, who live in the fuller light and instructions of the Spirit, and who own Him, and trust in Him, as our Saviour, can see these two aspects, harmoniously

united in the God-man, as the necessary attributes of Him, who is to save us from our sins, and intercede for us with the Father. But to them, it was as yet, comparatively an unexplained mystery. They had light enough for faith, and believing hope; enough to condemn them for rejecting His pure instructions, and resisting His claims; but it was far from being, either that clearness of evidence which *we* possess, or that which will be displayed, when CHRIST shall come again in His glory. It was neither clear, nor dark; neither day nor night.

The same is true of the Saviour's declarations concerning Himself, as He gradually unfolded to the Jews His character and claims. We can discover the dimness of the light, in which they were permitted to behold Him, by the repeated questions which they addressed to Him, as to who He was, and the authority by which He acted. In answering these questions, CHRIST does not enter into any lengthened *explanation* of the difficulties which must necessarily and *forever* be connected with the mystery of His person. He does not qualify one truth by another, but states them each distinctly, in all their prominence and fulness. Hence we hear Him, at one time, speaking in the plainest terms of His equality and oneness with the Father,—"I and my Father are one." We hear Him alluding to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. We hear Him claiming self-existence and eternal being, in assuming the incommunicable name of Jehovah,—I AM. So well did the Jews understand what He meant by this language, that they undertook to

stone Him for blasphemy. If they had *mis*understood, could not the Saviour have corrected their error?

But then again, we hear Him speaking in His suffering humanity, as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; with touching pathos declaring that the Son of man had not where to lay His head. In the struggles of Gethsemane, we hear Him exclaiming, "now is my soul troubled,—my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." In that hour of darkness, He draws around Him more closely the little band of His disciples, as though He could avail Himself of their sympathy and love,—rebuking them in tones of the tenderest reproach,—"will ye also go away?" The *man* Christ Jesus, was here revealed as plainly, as He had before spoken of His Divinity. Each doctrine stood forth in its own light, to teach us that He is indeed *very* God and *very* man,—the Saviour that we need. But the light which was *then* shed upon this great doctrine, was, as yet, but the first dawning of the opening day. The disciples of Christ cleaved to Him with an affectionate and docile faith in all His instructions; but still their minds were, at times, bewildered and perplexed by these seeming contradictions. When He spake of His power and glory, they gathered about Him in exulting hope, ready to crown Him as their King; and then, when they witnessed His grief, and tears, and the power of His foes, in wondering amazement and unbelieving fear, they all forsook Him and fled. So dim and indistinct was the light of this morning of our Redemption, "neither clear nor dark; neither perfect night, nor perfect day." And oh! in what redoubled darkness was that day shrouded, when Jesus passed to the consummation of

His great work, and expired upon the Cross! To their uninstructed minds, it was almost a total eclipse of the little light which they had hitherto enjoyed. Their Saviour die! He who claimed to be the Lord of Life and Glory, Himself the victim of death and the grave! How wonderful! How unintelligible! what an apparent disappointment of every fond hope! And yet even then, it was not *all* darkness. One ray of light still penetrated the otherwise profound gloom of this darkest hour. Their trembling hearts were still sustained by the frequent declarations of the Saviour, that on the third day He should rise again. Here was a gleam of hope, to shed its ray of light over the clouds and darkness, which surrounded the Divine dealings. It was enough to keep them from sinking into utter despair. It led them to keep their eyes directed to the place where the body of their beloved Lord was entombed still lingering about His sepulchre, with some undefined, expectations of relief from this saddest of all their trials. Thus through every stage of the Redeemer's work, we find an ample illustration of the prophetic language of the text, "The light was neither clear nor dark,—neither day nor night."

2. The sentiment of the passage has another instructive application to the whole period of the Gospel Dispensation. At no time has it been perfectly clear or perfectly dark. The history of the Redeemer's Church abounds in exemplifications of this truth. The fires of a bitter persecution have many a time, reduced her numbers and her strength. Enemies within herself have greatly endangered her prosperity and her very existence. False doctrine, superstition, and immorality,

have most sadly defaced her glory. But never has the Lord been without a chosen remnant,—a people to show forth His praise on the earth,—to shed over the gross darkness of the world, the reflected light of His holiness and glory. And were it not for the inspired language in which these vicissitudes are distinctly foretold, the believer would not know upon what to build his hopes for the final triumph of the Gospel. But by looking into the mirror of God's word, he sees that the Church is still living in the twilight only, of a great and glorious day; that she must be content to struggle on amidst discipline and suffering, till the day when her Lord shall again appear for her complete deliverance and salvation.

3. But the text has a third application to the circumstances of the individual believer. With him, the light is neither clear, nor dark. Compared with that cloudless day, in which he shall behold God's face in righteousness, it is neither night, nor day. His knowledge is imperfect; He sees but through a glass darkly. And the worship which he is able to render, is but the lisping of an infant tongue, compared with the song, which, like the sound of many waters, proceeds from the ten thousand times ten thousand, who are before the throne. How little do we know of the riches of our Immanuel's love,—that love which brought Him from the bosom of the Father,—which sustained Him amidst the agonies of the Cross, and which now intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father! How little do we know of Heaven, of that far more exceeding weight of glory, with which the soul of the believer will be clothed, when this mortal shall put on immortality.

Look too, at the outward circumstances of the Christian. How full of changes and uncertainty! To day, happiness and prosperity beaming upon him, the providence of God filling his heart with joy and gladness; to-morrow perhaps, in danger of being stripped of every earthly comfort,—the brightness of his day almost eclipsed in the darkness of his privation and fears. How many of us have had occasion to tremble and weep, and almost stumble and fall, amidst the strangeness of the Almighty's dealings with us. Afflictions in every shape are the Christian's lot. Sickness and bereavement veil in tears and gloom, the happiness of the domestic circle. Riches and comforts take to themselves wings, and fly away, and leave us to poverty and want. In general, it is not difficult for the believer to be resigned to this, knowing that man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. But often, Oh! how often, do we exclaim with the prophet, "Righteous art thou O Lord, when I plead with Thee; yet let me talk of Thy judgments." So unexpected and obscure are His dispensations, that we would fain seek to know the reasons of His doings; but it is too hard for us; our light is not sufficient,—and sometimes, in our deepest sorrows, we must sit down in silence with the promise, "what thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter." Throughout their journey in life, the people of God find that clouds and darkness are still round about Him; His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known.

The same is true of the Christian's inward experiences. At one time, there seems not a cloud between him and the Sun of Righteousness; at another he walks

in darkness, and sees no light. At one time, he can rest, with the calmness of a peaceful hope, upon the promises of the Redeemer; at another, he feels no confidence in appropriating a single promise; and his soul is filled with the fiery darts of Satan. But even in his brightest hour, it is not perfect day. He is still sensible of weakness and of sin, and longs to be unclothed, to depart and to be with Jesus. And in his *darkest* hour, it is not perfect night. There is yet the lingerings of a feeble hope in the bosom of the most despondding Christian,—a hope, which he would not abandon for the wealth of worlds, and which will yet, by the grace of God, spring up into believing assurance and joy.

We have thus endeavored to open to you the meaning of this portion of our text, in its varied application to the times of the Messiah, or the Gospel day. We proceed now, briefly, to the consideration of the rest of the passage. "But it shall be one day," says the Prophet, "which shall be known to the Lord."

Here then, is the faith and the patience of the Saints. However feeble may be the light, or however oppressive and perplexing the obscurity, to us, we are assured, that every event is ordered and controlled by the infinite wisdom and love of God. Over all this apparent confusion, we are comforted with the thought that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. It is a part of that Divine scheme, which His omniscient mind contrived. His watchful eye is never removed from its operations; and He will continue to preside over the gradual development of His purposes, till they shall ripen, to the praise and glory of His grace. We can see this in the past; and as we see Him bringing light out of darkness,

it should strengthen our trust in Him for all that is yet to befall us. How gloriously was the wisdom of God vindicated, in all that afflicted the minds of the sorrowing disciples of Jesus! It was dark and inscrutable to them at the time, but when the Spirit was poured out upon them from on high, and they saw in a clearer light the designs of God,—when the words of CHRIST, and all the acts of His redeeming love, passed in review before them, how must they have bowed in adoring wonder before Him, who had thus performed "His work, His strange work, and brought to pass His act, His strange act." They could then, in the strength of an enlightened faith, behold in the face of the man CHRIST Jesus, the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father. They could then discern the wisdom of God in the mystery of godliness; that it *became* Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings; and inasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, that He likewise Himself should take part of the same; that through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death. In the Cross of Jesus, they could discern the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

And so in all the vicissitudes of His Church, it is a day perfectly known unto the Lord. All her circumstances of adversity or prosperity have not passed unnoticed by her ever-living Head and King. When Zion in her affliction has said,—"the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me,"—then has He spoken comfortably unto her,—"Behold, I have graven thee up-

on the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me."

And what an abiding source of comfort is it to the believer, when entangled amidst the difficulties of his conflicts, to know that what is darkness to him, is all light to the Lord,—that what may seem to him the crushing hand of God's displeasure, is the tender chastisement of of His love;—that through pain, and sorrow, bereavement, and poverty, he is being led by his Saviour, to riches and honor,—a kingdom and a crown. How beautifully expressive of this humble trust in the watchful guardianship of God, is the language of the patient and submissive Job. In the depth of his multiplied afflictions, he lost that sensible presence of God, which is so precious to the soul. "Behold," he says, "I go forward, but He is not there; and backwards, but I cannot perceive Him;—on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him;—He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him. But He knoweth the way that I take;—when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Beautiful exhibition of triumphant faith! a faith which cleaves to God, amidst tears and anguish, and when the soul is groping in the very darkness and shadow of death!

But finally; our text assures us in conclusion, that this state of obscurity is not to continue forever. "It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." The day of doubt and faith, and fear and hope, shall have its close. It *has had* its morning,—and we have reason to believe that it has passed its meridian,—and that the shadows of the evening are fast gathering about *us*, who live in these latter days. *How* soon, it is not for

us to know; but *soon*, we know, the day of the world's probation shall be ended;—time shall be no longer;—and then, at its eventide, and over its darkest hour, there shall break forth upon the people of God, the refulgent light of a great and glorious and eternal day,—light without *any* darkness,—a light before which every doubt shall vanish,—every fear subside,—and faith and hope shall be swallowed up in perfect love, in the clear vision of God. It is called distinctly "the day of the revelation of Jesus CHRIST;"—a day in which the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels. Yes, the light of that day shall reveal Jesus as He is,—the majesty of the eternal Son of God beaming forth from His glorified body. There will then be no longer any doubt that He is indeed the mighty God, when every eye shall see Him in His glory, and shall hear that voice pronouncing the doom of an assembled world. In the light of that day, the Church of the Redeemer shall be *all* glorious. Zion shall awake, and shake herself from the dust, and put on her beautiful garments. She shall be purified from all her defilements, and none shall enter therein, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. And the believer, too, shall be with Jesus, and shall see Him, and shall hear from His own blessed lips, the assurance of forgiveness, and a complete salvation. He shall no longer step tremblingly in a straight and narrow way,—but in the freedom of a soul delivered forever from the bondage of sin, he shall joyfully follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. And oh! with what grateful praise, will he look back, in the light of that day, upon all the way through which his Lord has led him, and thank

Him for every pain he suffered, and for every tear he shed. The love of Christ for His people shall then be revealed and felt in all its tenderness. "God Himself shall be with them, and shall be their God. He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,—and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

Sermon 10.

CHRIST THE FOUNDATION.

1 Cor. iii. 11.—"*For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is* Jesus Christ."

Divisions in the Church seem to have originated among the Christians at Corinth. It was here that professed believers began to classify and arrange themselves under human leaders, and to assume human distinctions in religion. One said, "I am of Paul;"—another, "I, of Apollos;"—another, "I, of Cephas;"—another, "I, of Christ." The Apostle, especially in the first three chapters of this Epistle, strongly rebukes them for this course of procedure. He shows them that it springs from a carnal or fleshly mind,—a mind still under the control of its natural instincts,—not guided by the Spirit of God, to discern that there is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, and, of course, that the children of God constitute but one universal, undivided, household. He reminds them that Paul, and Apollos, and Peter were servants of the same common Lord, preached the same Gospel,—were not divided from each other,

as heads of different religious sects;—much less opposed to each other;—and finally, that however many, or influential, may be the human teachers in the Church, they were all the commissioned messengers of one Divine Master, who alone is to be regarded as the Head and infallible Guide to His people,—and in whom they were to be united by the Spirit, as one fold, under one Shepherd.

The Apostle thus sets forth CHRIST, as the centre of union to all believers, under the most appropriate and instructive figure of a *foundation*. "For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST." Now the members of the Church at Corinth, were really attempting to do this. Instead of regarding the Apostles and themselves, as lively stones of one spiritual fabric, built upon CHRIST as their common foundation, they were laying separate foundations of their own. Some, building upon Paul; others, upon Apollos; others, upon Cephas, (or Peter,) and others, again, upon CHRIST;—thus, instead of one, undivided, universal, and harmonious, body of believers, animated by one Spirit, and striving together for the one Faith, and seeking the glory of their one Divine Lord, they were separating themselves into rival sects, putting Paul, and Apollos, and Peter, upon a level with CHRIST,—tearing up from its very foundations, the glorious Temple of the one living and true God, and substituting for it a multitude of human fabrics, built upon the sandy foundation of an attachment to human leaders, and submission to their fallible guidance.

The term which the Apostle here uses, in designating the relation of CHRIST to the Church, is an architectural

one, and refers to that which is the lowest part of a building, and on which the whole superstructure rests. It is a term, however, which is often employed to denote the *beginning* of anything, and sometimes the essential principle of any system. In our text, it may be considered as applicable to each and all of these significations. The Church, for instance, is a spiritual Edifice, and Jesus is the foundation-stone. Redemption is a dispensation of grace and mercy to man, and of that dispensation, Jesus CHRIST is the beginning. Christianity is a system of faith, and of that system, CHRIST is both the centre, and essential principle. Let us then, for a few moments, consider CHRIST as a Foundation, in this general sense of the term.

1. CHRIST is the foundation of the Gospel.

The Gospel is emphatically the Gospel of Jesus CHRIST. He is its Founder, its Source, its Theme, and its Glory. Before the Saviour came upon earth, and uttered the gracious words of mercy and salvation to a lost world, the minds of the wisest men were agitated by doubts and fears, in regard to everything connected with Eternity, and their own responsibility. Life and immortality were brought to light by the Saviour. It was the instructions of CHRIST that shed the first clear beams of light upon the gross darkness of the world,—which revealed God to the benighted soul, in all the glories of His Holiness and Love,—which taught man the certainty of a future state, the resurrection of the body from the grave, and the unalterable retributions of the Future. Full and satisfactory information upon these important subjects, can be derived from no other source than the lips of our Divine Teacher. And as

the doctrines of the Gospel, so all its privileges,—all its blessings, are from Him, and Him only. All its ordinances bear His name;—all its light and glory emanate from Him. He too is the subject,—the *theme*, of its varied instructions. However diversified these may be, they can all be traced back to the Cross of Jesus, as streams to their fountain,—as the beams of light to the sun, which sends its genial influences over every part of nature. Apostles and Martyrs are the Apostles and Martyrs of Jesus. The saving truth of the Gospel, is the truth as it is in Jesus. In a word, CHRIST and Him crucified is the *foundation*, upon which rests the whole fabric of spiritual truth, and which binds together in a beautiful and harmonious whole, the various parts of that glorious system of mercy, by which man is saved, and sanctified, and glorified.

Again,—CHRIST is the foundation of the sinner's acceptance with God.

He is the only way of access unto the Father. He is the one only Mediator,—the true propitiation or Mercy-seat. We are justified by faith in Him. In Him alone, we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. There is no other name given under Heaven, among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus. And as the guilty soul derives the first ray of light, and joy, and peace, from looking unto CHRIST as a Saviour, so does the believer rest continually upon Him, as the ground of his safety and stability, and the foundation of all his blessed hopes. The Christian is begotten to a lively hope; but it is by the resurrection of CHRIST from the dead. CHRIST is formed in him, the hope of glory. The believer's hopes relate to

a full and complete salvation,—to victory in death,—to a resurrection from the dead, in the likeness of CHRIST, —to an abundant entrance into the kingdom of the Divine Glory, and to unspeakable bliss in the presence of God forever. But all these great and sublime hopes rest entirely upon the Saviour. We conquer only through Him; we die happy in Him; we shall be raised from the dead, by the power and word of Jesus. We shall be admitted into the realms of glory by the hand of Jesus, and by His voice of welcome. And that Eternal Life which is the portion of the redeemed, will flow from CHRIST, as from a living and inexhaustible fountain.

What other foundation can any man lay than this, upon which we would dare to build such hopes as these?

Once more;—CHRIST is the foundation of the whole Church. As He is the Rock upon which each individual soul builds its hopes of salvation, so will He sustain, by His strength alone, the whole Body of His redeemed. The government is upon His shoulders. When St. Peter confessed His divine character, as the CHRIST, the Son of the Living God,—Jesus replied, "On this Rock will I build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "He is Head over all things to His Church," "from whom all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." In CHRIST as the foundation of His Church, all fulness dwells. The Church on earth, in all her vicissitudes and struggles, so far as she has been built upon Jesus and His truth, has found herself invincible. The winds and the waves of her tribulations have indeed swept away much of the wood, and the hay, and the stubble, which the corrupt-

ion of ages had gathered about her, but they have only left the true Temple of the Lord, the firmer upon its foundation, and better prepared to stand the shock of her foes. Men have built upon other foundations, and have called their work, the Church of the Living God;—but it was unable to endure the day of fiery trial, and both the workmen and their work have passed away. But Jesus is a sure foundation, a Corner Stone, both tried and precious. He will bear up the building, until it shall be finished in all its glorious proportions, and they shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings—crying, "grace! grace! unto it."

2. Let us notice, in the next place, some of the distinguishing characteristics of this Foundation. It is distinguished, *first*, for its *strength*. This is indispensable in a foundation—if it were frail and yielding, the safety of the whole building would be endangered. But in CHRIST are found all those elements of strength, which are requisite to sustain His church, when shaken by the violence of her enemies. Possessing, as He does, all power both in heaven and earth, in vain will the powers of earth and of Hell, exert their combined force, to defeat the hopes which are built upon His covenanted engagements. Holding the keys of death and of the invisible world, every enemy is subjected to His control. "The kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed,—but He that sitteth in the heavens, shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." Beneath the church are the Everlasting arms, and the Eternal God is her refuge. Every believer in Jesus becomes a partaker of His strength. So long as he re-

mains fixed upon this foundation, as well might he fear for the throne of God, and the stability of His government, as doubt of his ultimate triumph over the mightiest obstacles to his salvation. He becomes omnipotent through the Omnipotence of CHRIST. "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand."

Another characteristic of this foundation is, that it is hidden from the view. This is true of the foundation of every building which is calculated for strength and durability. Concealed in the firm earth, it feels not the shock of the elements. And while it is the real source of security to that which is exposed to the violence of the the winds and the floods, yet to one unacquainted with the laws of architecture, it would not only be *hidden* from the view, but an *unknown* and *mysterious* power. And the same is true of CHRIST, as the foundation of His church. Though He was once manifested unto men in the flesh, and their hands once handled the Word of Life, yet even *then*, the Divine power by which He worked, was unseen and unacknowledged by an unbelieving world. His Divinity, the very basis of His mysterious character, and the foundation of the world's hopes, was known and acknowledged, only by an humble and living faith. And now that He is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, He has become indeed the unseen, and to the minds of many, the *unknown* foundation, upon which the believer builds all his expectations for Eternity. It is this invisibility of her Foundation, which gives to the Church her mysterious character in the view of the world. Earthly dynasties have expired,—empires have perished,—the revolutions and disasters of time have

changed the whole face of the globe; and yet the Church of the Redeemer has outlived them all, and still looks forward to an endless growth and perpetuity, with Jesus for her Founder and her King,—JESUS, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. This would indeed be unaccountable, if she did not differ from all earthly kingdoms, in the character of her Foundation. But the Rock of her hopes is laid in Eternity, unseen by mortal eye,—far from the storms and changes of this lower world, and unaffected by the wrath of man, or the malignity of Hell. The world does not *see* this; unbelief has prematurely triumphed over what she has fondly thought was the Church's ruin. The scoffer and the infidel have dreamed of her extermination, because they could not penetrate beyond the boundary of time and sense, and behold her interests indestructibly linked with the faithfulness and the very existence of Jehovah. Hence too, the believer is a wonder to many; a strange spectacle to those who know not how broad and deep is that unseen Foundation, upon which he stands. His language is strange to them, his love, his joy,—his hopes,—his perseverance amidst the rudest shocks, are all mysterious to a faithless world, because it sees not the source of his strength. But the secret of all this is, that he walks by faith, and not by sight. He lives, as seeing Him who is invisible. His life is hid with Christ in God—His eye and his affections are fixed upon the things which are above, where CHRIST sitteth at the right hand of God. He is inseparably united to CHRIST, whom having not seen, he loves,—in whom though now he sees Him not, yet believing, he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Once more;—CHRIST is a Foundation, every way suitable for the accomplishment of that work which Divine love and wisdom projected for the salvation of man. God and man, sundered by sin, were to be brought together again, in harmony and love. The distance which separated them was vast as Eternity itself. Who shall stand in this awful breach, and undertake the great work of re-uniting in allegiance and love to a holy God, a revolted world, justly exposed to His wrath? The work transcends an Angel's wisdom;—an Angel's love and power could avail nothing in saving a single soul from death. The Foundation and Corner Stone of such an enterprise, must be broad enough to fill up the measureless gulf between God and His creature man; it must be strong enough to bind together, in an everlasting and harmonious union, the discordant elements of that moral ruin which sin has introduced into our world. And no where can these requisites be found, save in the eternal Son of God,—God manifest in the flesh. In the person of Jesus, as our atoning Saviour,—the trembling soul of man may meet his God in love and peace. There is room in the Saviour's bosom for every lost and perishing sinner. As man He suffered, and He died for our salvation;—and as God, He is qualified to speak to the penitent and believing soul, the language of pardon, of confidence and peace.

Here is mercy brought down to a level with our condition. Here,—all that we need—all that we could wish, is within our grasp. But it is the achievement of Almighty love and wisdom. Nothing but the arm of Omnipotence could have laid a Foundation so broad, and so all sufficient for the wants of the soul; and no

other foundation can any man lay, than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST.

And yet, the text supposes that men would attempt this, though it affirms the impossibility of affecting it. We have seen that some in the Church at Corinth actually made this attempt, by looking more to mere human teachers, than to CHRIST. And the history of the Church in all ages amply bears out the supposition of the text. The perverse ingenuity of the human heart, blind to the wisdom of God, and averse to His methods of mercy, has laid and embellished many false foundations, to attract men, and draw them away from the only Saviour of sinners. Let us look, in conclusion, at some few of the instances in which men attempt to lay another foundation than CHRIST. They do this, who are trusting to the dictates of unsanctified reason for their knowledge of Divine truth. What havoc have these luminaries of Nature made among the spiritual doctrines of the Cross! The mysteries of the Gospel are to them an offence, and a stumbling block so fatal, that the words of Jesus are either rejected, or so tortured from their just meaning, as to be emptied of all their peculiar significance. *Reason* is substituted for a simple faith in the declarations of the Son of God; and the consequence is, that they have undeified the Saviour,—extinguished the Holy Spirit—frittered away the doctrine of the Atonement,—made Satan and Satanic agency, a visionary illusion,—and placed a cold repentance, and a lifeless faith, and a spiritless morality, as the basis of salvation. It is impossible to exclude such from among those who lay another foundation.

This is done, 2, by relying distinctly upon our own

righteousness for acceptance with God. This may be done in many ways and forms. By trusting to our honesty, or to the absence of notorious and flagrant crimes; to acts of generosity, of devotion, and self-denial; to the correctness of our creed, or to our public profession. All these things are well, and indispensable in their place. They go to adorn and verify the Christian character. They are the genuine fruits of faith, and are the just signs and manifestations of an inward life. But as the soul's *foundation*, they are absolutely worthless. For by the deeds of the law, shall no flesh be justified. When we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants. As a ground of hope for salvation, our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags. Jesus and His righteousness, and atoning love, are alone sufficient to present us spotless before the throne of God.

Again—when we rest solely upon God's mercy to the exclusion of the Saviour's merits, we are laying another foundation than CHRIST. It is a glorious truth that God is merciful,—but it is by, and through, the Cross of Jesus, that this mercy is most strikingly and effectually manifested. Besides, Jehovah is just and holy and true, as well as merciful; and there is no other way in which these attributes can harmoniously blend with His mercy in the salvation of the sinner, save in the Cross of Jesus. He that believeth shall be saved. He that believeth not shall inevitably perish.

And not only is it vain and foolish, but it is exceedingly criminal, to attempt to lay another foundation than CHRIST. It is a presumptous reflection upon Jehovah's wisdom and goodness, and upon CHRIST'S sufficiency to save. Jesus, as the Foundation of the sinner's hopes,

is identified with the depths of infinite skill—with the boundlessness of Divine love—with the unspeakable preciousness of Atoning blood. The attempt to lay another, is setting at nought these perfections of the great God, and trampling under foot the blood of Jesus. It is exalting one's self-sufficiency above the wisdom of God, and the grace of the Lord Jesus CHRIST. Is He not *able* and willing to save even to the uttermost, all that come unto Him? Did He ever reject even the chief of sinners, when coming to Him as an humble supplicant for mercy? What folly then to build upon any other foundation than that which God, in infinite mercy, has laid! We are not left to *choose*. If we build upon CHRIST, we are saved. If we build upon our own foundations, they will involve us in inevitable ruin. Come, then, to Him who is the Life and Light of the world. Come, sinner! and let your earliest hopes and joys be found in the peace-speaking blood of the cross.

And, Believer, with all your attainments, and services for CHRIST, remember that He who hath wrought all your good works in you, must be your only Saviour; and that He will not give His glory to another.

Sermon II.

THE CERTAIN DETECTION OF SIN.

NUMBERS XXXII. 23.—"*And be sure your sin will find you out.*"

The text is one of those numerous passages of Scripture, which speak in the language of warning to the sinner, assuring him of the final detection and punishment of sin. It is the characteristic of the Gospel, that in it "mercy and truth have met together—righteousness and peace have kissed each other,"—i. e. whilst mercy and peace are proclaimed to the penitent and believing, to all who comply with the terms of salvation,—truth and righteousness will still be maintained unimpaired. Though merciful, God is still jealous of His holiness; and hence the sinfulness of our nature, and the sinful acts which flow from that nature, must either be washed away and forgiven through the blood of our great Sacrifice, or else, must meet with the punishment which the law demands. In one, or the other, of these ways, must sin and the sinner be dealt with. God will never *overlook* transgression, nor lose sight of the transgressor.

He will either *save* him, as an humble, obedient disciple of Jesus, or He will visit him with the stern and eternal retributions of His justice. Our Saviour, who was the very impersonation of the gospel, and whose deep and ardent love for the soul, no one can question, uttered the most fearful maledictions against sin, thereby illustrating the fact, which is never to be forgotten,—that whilst God is rich in mercy, He will by no means clear the guilty. If man indulge the dream of impunity, he does it at the peril of his soul, and must trample upon the plainest declarations of God's Word. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." "I will punish you for your iniquities," saith the Lord. "And be sure your sin will find you out."

The circumstances under which these words were uttered, were briefly the following. When the children of Israel had passed the wilderness, they pitched their tabernacle in the plains of Moab, preparatory to their passage over Jordan. Whilst resting from the toils of their journey, the tribes of Reuben and Gad, saw that the region of country upon that side Jordan was admirably adapted, from its fertility, to serve as a pasture for their flocks and herds. They therefore petitioned Moses and the chief men of Israel, for permission to occupy that land, instead of seeking, in company with the other tribes, an inheritance in Canaan. Moses, at first, severely rebuked them for such a request, supposing that they wished to escape the approaching struggle with the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan. But when they had solemnly assured him, that they would leave their cattle and their little ones behind them, and share with their brethren all the perils of the war, he gave

them his consent,—reminding them, at the same time, that their covenant was a transaction with God, and that the Lord would deal with them according to the fidelity with which they might fulfil their engagement. "If ye *will* do this thing," he says, "ye shall return and be guiltless before the Lord, and this land shall be your possession. But if ye will *not* do so—behold, ye have sinned against *the Lord*, and be sure your sin will find you out."

Had these two tribes failed to redeem their pledge, there could have been nothing in their acts, which would render their sin *peculiarly* liable to detection. It would indeed have been a daring offence against God; the text, however, does not teach us, that *such* sins will be remembered, whilst others will be forgotten; but it illustrates and solemnly assures us of the *general* truth, that *every* sinful act is faithfully recorded in the Book of God's remembrance, and, unless an interest in the Redeemer's blood prevent, will bring dismay and ruin upon the transgressor. It speaks to every impenitent soul. It points you, my Hearers, to the past; and whilst it sends you back, in recollection, over the path which you have trod in life, and bids you recall the numerous offences which you have committed, it directs you to the future, with the dread announcement, "Be sure your sin will find you out." The language is such as to strip the subject of even the shadow of a doubt. It does not leave the sinner even a peradventure, upon which to suspend a hope. There is no hesitation in its tone; you are not told that it is highly *probable*, but that it is absolutely *certain*. "*Be sure*," indulge not the slightest hope of escape, but "*Be sure* your sin will

find you out." It is this *certainty* which gives a terrific emphasis to the declaration. It sweeps away, at a blow, every ground of false confidence, and sends its warning voice into every one of the sinner's refuges of lies. The utmost *secrecy* will not prevent it. No *human* witness may betray the secret, but you have sinned against the Lord, and "Be sure your sin will find you out." You will yet be made to tremble under just impressions of its malignity,—you will be humbled under the shame of its disclosure, and suffer under the punishment of its accumulated consequences.

The phrase, "Your sin will find you out," is a peculiarly expressive one. It represents the sinner as a culprit, endeavoring to hide himself from the pursuit of justice,—assuming first one disguise and then another, constantly driven from the place of his temporary concealment, sometimes, for a long period together, dwelling in fancied security, till suddenly startled by the reappearance of his indefatigable and perhaps forgotten enemy; then betaking himself again to flight, till wearied in the chase, he becomes the powerless victim of his dreaded pursuer. Such is the career of the thoughtless transgressor. Your sin, my Hearers, will follow you with relentless pertinacity. It will never give up the chase. It will follow you in all the windings of your course, defeating every cunning stratagem, and dispelling every fond delusion, till you are compelled to exclaim with the guilty King of Israel, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy." The sinner is a constant fugitive. The Avenger of blood is behind him, and he will find no solace to his fears, no repose for his guilty soul, till he find them in a well assured hope of pardon, at the foot

of the Cross. Sin must not be concealed from your own eye, nor must you attempt to cloak it from the eye of God. Confession—unfeigned repentance, and a resort to that fountain which has been opened for sin and uncleanness, can alone save the soul from the power of the Destroyer.

But how will sin thus overtake the guilty? What is it, that renders the result so fearfully certain? Is there nothing besides the simple declarations of God's Word, to fortify the assertion of the text? Is there nothing which echoes the truth of that Word, and clothes its assurances with a tenfold power of conviction? We venture to affirm that there is; and would now invite your attention to a brief consideration of that point.

1. From what we know of *God*—even if He had made no *revelation* of the fact, we might have reasonably drawn the conclusion, that no sin, however slight or secretly committed, would be forever concealed or forgotten. He is the God of *truth* and of *righteousness*. He is described as sitting on the throne of judgment, as the high and mighty Ruler of the universe. He is perfectly *able* to unveil the hidden works of darkness; and as a Being, whose very perfections require that none of His attributes should be tarnished, He *cannot* pass by a single act of sin. Should He do so, He would cease to be qualified to judge the world in righteousness. He would cease to be that spotless Being whom saints and angels rejoice in exalting, as glorious in holiness. The wisest and the most perfect *human* legislation must necessarily fail to take cognizance of much that is wrong in this sinful world; and hence, after all the efforts of law-makers and reformers, the heart of the Christian

and the true philanthropist, is compelled to rest its last hope for the *entire* removal of moral evil, in the omnipotence of a perfectly holy and righteous God. Take away this last resort,—let the supposition once prevail that the great Governor of all will suffer the smallest sin to pass into oblivion, and you at once remove the very basis of morality, and the hopes of the righteous. When the sinner, therefore, indulges the thought that because his offences cease to trouble him, *God* has forgotten, and will never bring them to his remembrance, he degrades the character of the Almighty. To silence his fears, he changes the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man. Rather than turn from sin, by a true repentance, and sincere confession of his guilt, he chooses to add to his condemnation, by casting dishonor upon his Maker. For what is this, but making God a partaker of his sin? What is it but bringing down the Holy one of Israel to a level with his own corrupt nature, when he saith, "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." How difficult is it for imperfect man, to preserve the notion of a *perfect* God! How prone are we to indulge false conceptions of Him, when driven by the reproaches of guilt, to seek for some other shelter, than that which Almighty love has provided! But such ideas of God contradict the sober conclusions of an unbiassed judgment. If sin were not loved more than He who has forbidden all sin, there could be no pleasure in the thought of a God, who would disregard iniquity. Every pure mind loves to contemplate a perfectly pure and sin-hating God, who will one day bring to light, every secret thing, whether it be good or bad. The very na-

ture of God, then, demands that no sin should be overlooked. Like the scoffers of old, men may say in their heart, "where is the promise of His coming." But be sure their sin will find them out. The character of God requires it. He has appointed a day in which He will vindicate His character against all gainsayers. For the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering, not willing that any should perish. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; a day in which the Lord of Hosts will be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy will be sanctified in righteousness.

2. We are also taught the certainty of sin's detection, from the constitution of *our own* nature. God has implanted in the breast of every man a *natural conscience*, —that faculty of the soul, by which we either acquit or condemn ourselves, according as our actions are either right or wrong. Just so far as we are enlightened in regard to our duty, it is impossible for us to transgress without receiving the rebukes of this faithful monitor. Tell me, my Hearers, if you ever did that which you knew to be wrong, without trampling upon the reproofs of conscience. Call to mind any one of the multitude of your known sins, and say if, in the act of committing it, there was not a something within you which whispered to you of guilt, which made you falter and hesitate, and compelled you to struggle with your convictions. Are there not some transactions of your past life, upon which you cannot look back except with discomfort, and which you would gladly have blotted from existence, as well as from your remembrance? And whence arises this trembling hesitation in the act of sin?

this shrinking reluctance to bring every past deed to remembrance? Why is it that you would obliterate from the pages of God's Book the sure record of a coming judgment, and that you cannot look forward to a dying hour with calmness, much less with the joy of a soul anticipating a happy eternity? Ah! it is because of that Accuser and Judge within you,—a Conscience, stern and faithful, which like the great Author of your being neither slumbers nor sleeps. In the whirl of business, or the intoxication of pleasure, you may beguile yourself with the fancy that the past will be forgotten—and the future all be well. You may strive to stifle reflection, and to live only in the present moment, and for a season,—nay, for many short seasons, you may perhaps succeed. But you were *made* for reflection; you were made for the future. As a rational being, you cannot escape this necessity of your nature. You will be compelled, in spite of yourself, frequently to take a retrospect of the past, and you will be equally compelled, at times, to send your thoughts into the future. You cannot always be occupied with the present. The mind will grow weary of such monotony, and like the long pent-up tide, she will burst the feeble barriers which you are striving to erect, and will traverse the past and the future, with a power and rapidity which you cannot restrain.

And then it is that *conscience* will be your inseparable companion. As days and months and years pass before you, this faithful servant of the Most High will point you to sins which you had long striven to forget. Each one will be arrayed before you, not in the deceptive colors in which you dressed it, whilst excusing your-

self for committing it, but in all the naked deformity of its guilt. Conscience is no deceiver,—no flatterer.—When the passions are all still, and the soul is fitted for serious and impartial judgment, then does she approach in the majesty of truth, and tell of "righteousness and of a judgment to come." You will be forced to listen to her accusations, for she is a part of your very self; and before you can drown her voice, the soul itself must be annihilated.

But if the past be so intolerable, what think you of the future? Is there any thing there, my impenitent Hearer, which will make the reproaches of conscience more easy to be borne? When she points you to the chamber of death,—to the sinking body and the struggling soul, can you contemplate the scene unmoved? As she tells you of that hour, when the world will have lost its power to please, and your own reflections must either be your comforters, or your tormentors, can you think of it without a shudder? Can you pass on with this companion, when with the record of your guilt before you, she tells you, in tones of solemn warning, "Know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment!"

Now we say, that this constitution of your nature,—the possession of a Conscience which bears her decided testimony against sin, is a convincing argument that your sin will surely find you out. We have already remarked, that it is in seasons of calm thoughtfulness, that conscience busily acts her part. The excitement of business or of pleasure, when the soul is occupied with external objects, may render you insensible to her grave rebukes. We have also remarked, that whenever the

mind is thrown into an attitude of reflection, as it must frequently be, conscience never fails to do her duty, as a stern remembrancer and a faithful rebuker. Now let us apply the argument. There is a season coming in the history of your existence, when the excitements and the allurements of pleasure shall all have passed away. But as an undying spirt, *you* will live forever. You must abandon your accustomed places of resort, and your cherished plans for life, and must, however reluctantly, obey the summons of death. The business of the world must be exchanged for the business of Eternity. Gay and thoughtless levity must give way to the seriousness of a dying chamber, the cold and cheerless tomb, the solemn awards of the judgment-seat, the unbroken solemnities of the eternal world. Not a moment will then be permitted, in which the soul can forget herself. Seasons of reflection will not be *occasional;* Eternity will be one long unceasing period of thought; and you will think and reflect, purely as *moral* beings. Your relations to God and to His commands, will form the *constant* subject of your thoughts; not, as now, unfrequent, periodical,—the effect of weariness and disgust with the world; but the natural actings of a spirit dwelling in a world of spirits. No scene of pleasure will be spread before you by which to beguile your painful convictions. *All* will be one unwearied,—everlasting season of solemn thought, of *self*-reflection. Now, my Hearers, when you leave this world. you must carry your conscience with you. She is a part of your living spirit, and will therefore be your eternal companion, in that season of eternal reflection. Her office in eternity will be the same as here, to tell the soul of *guilt;* of

mercies abused, and of a wrath, which forever will still be "the wrath to come." But O, how differently will she then perform her office! Not even for a moment can her voice be drowned. "She will continually hold out her dreadful mirror to the terrified eye; and exhibit you to yourself, odious, deformed, and fearfully exposed to the anger of God." It will be her special business to remind you of your sins, and *not one* will be forgotten. *All!* all will be faithfully presented,—not to be excused or to be thought lightly of, but to be *felt* and to be felt *forever*. As surely then, my Hearers, as you have a conscience, and must die, and carry that conscience with you into Eternity, so sure may you be, that *your sin will find you out*. Your very nature must be changed, before you can alter this declaration of the word of God. Let then, the warnings of conscience be heeded, whilst sin may be pardoned, and your soul purged from the stain of guilt. O, come unto Him whom your sins have slain, and whose blood alone can cleanse you from their pollution. Conscience now speaks in tones of gentle admonition. She speaks of repentance, and she tells you of a Saviour's love. Wait not until she begins to thunder her everlasting rebukes,—when the season of mercy shall be over, and God shall clothe Himself in the terrors of His wrath!

3. *Once more;*—We may learn the certainty of the detection and exposure of sin, from the course of Providential occurrences. By this we mean, that in the progress of the sinner's history, even in this life, he will frequently encounter trying emergencies, critical situations, which awaken all his fears, lest his secret sins are about to be disclosed to the world. To make our

meaning still clearer, we will take an illustration. We will suppose that some one of you, my Hearers, has been guilty of a secret act of wrong doing, an act lying far back in your history, and known only to yourself. The circumstances under which that act was committed, led you to hope that it would *remain* a secret,—that under no possible combination of events, so far as you could conjecture, would it be forced into public notice. Encouraged by this appearance of probable concealment, you have suffered it to pass almost from your recollection;—or if you think of it, it is with comparative complacency, supposing that what you most dread, viz, a disclosure, will never occur. Now have there not been occasions, when in spite of all your care and watchfulness, the course of providential circumstances seemed to be upon the point of revealing your secret? Affairs have taken a turn which you did not anticipate; the "net of circumstances begins to entangle you," and perhaps in a moment more, the fatal secret, long buried in your own bosom, will be before the world. You tremble at the crisis;—regrets and fears begin to agitate your breast, and you silently await the bursting of the cloud which is to involve you in ruin. But, by what you may term a fortunate turn of events, you escape undetected. Every thing again assumes its wonted aspect of security, and soon your fears are calmed,—your wonted confidence returns,—to be disturbed by another, and still another crisis, equally appalling to your spirit. Now these seasons of fearful apprehension, occasioned by circumstances on which you had not calculated, are awful indications of the ultimate and sure disclosure of even the most secret sin. This is what we mean when

we say that we may learn the certainty of this disclosure from the course of providential occurrences. They teach you that you are not the master of events; and furthermore, that there is no such thing as chance,—that above all the *apparent* confusion of things in this world, there reigns a God of *order*,—a God of righteousness and of *judgment*. We are most solemnly assured that He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness,—a day in which He will finally and publicly adjust all that may seem wrong or inconsistent in this world of sin. Those trying situations of which we have spoken, would seem to be arranged by a God waiting to be gracious, for the purpose of certifying the trembling offender, how rapidly he is approaching that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. They are gleams of light darting from the throne of judgment, upon the obscurity of this dark world, enabling us in a measure, to penetrate God's future purposes of justice, and unfolding with a plainness that cannot be mistaken, the meaning of His declarations in His word. They furnish the sinner with a merciful opportunity to turn from his wickedness, before the judgment is set and the books are opened, and the sentence of eternal condemnation is pronounced. O that men "were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

By His word and by His providences, God tells us that a day of retribution is at hand. We are left without excuse, if we sport ourselves with our own deceivings whilst surrounded and urged by the solemn assurances of a God of love. Listen, then, before it be too late, to the kind warnings of the Bible, to the lessons of your

own experience, — to the admonitions of your conscience. Trifle not with sin; it is a deceiver and a destroyer. Call it not a light thing to transgress even the *least* of God's commandments. A little transgression, like the grain of mustard seed, will spring up into a fruitful harvest of shame and woe. Do you say that you can remember no sin with which your conscience particularly reproaches you? that you have never committed any act so sinful in the sight of God or man, as to haunt you with any fearful anticipations of disclosure or punishment? I will not now stop to speak of the deceitfulness of that heart which is so insensible to what *all* sin deserves at the hands of a holy and righteous God. But let me ask, have you yet yielded to the claims of the Son of God upon your heart and life? Have you not repeatedly closed your heart to the invitations of the Saviour, and the pleadings of His Holy Spirit? Have not the allurements of sin, and your love of this present world, led you to stifle the voice of conscience, when you were almost persuaded to be a Christian? And is it *no sin* to put this slight upon Jesus, and His great salvation? O it is the sin of all sins; and lightly as you may estimate it, it will, if persisted in, sink your soul to the lowest Hell. "Your sin will surely find you out," when the interests or enjoyments, for which you have trampled upon the blood of the Cross, shall leave you comfortless and friendless. It "will find you out," in the distress and anguish of a dying hour,—when the soul, struggling upon the borders of eternity, has no God to look to, no Saviour to whisper a word of consolation, or one blessed promise. It "will find you out,"—when you shall be summoned from

your grave to the judgment, and find no Advocate to plead for your guilty soul at that tribunal. And from the lips of your despised and neglected Lord, shall pass the dread sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, I know you not!" "Whosoever," says CHRIST, "shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father and the holy angels."

Sermon 12.

THE SAVIOUR'S NAME.

(CHRISTMAS.)

S. MATTHEW I. 23.—"*And they shall call His name* EMMANUEL, *which, being interpreted is, God with us.*"

These words point us back to Isaiah; who, from the frequent allusions in his writings, to the coming and sufferings of the Messiah, has been very aptly styled the Evangelical prophet. The prediction that a Virgin should bring forth a Son, and that his name should be called Emmanuel, was uttered more than seven hundred years before Jesus was born, and is a remarkable instance of the particularity with which this event was foretold,—an event so full of mercy and peace to our world. And is not this fact pregnant with an important lesson to us, who live under the clear light of the Gospel? Shall we value so little the privileges, the unspeakable blessings, which flow to us from the condescension of our Redeemer, as to think that a day set apart for the *special* commemoration of His love, is an

act of superfluous worship? Shall an event which gave all its energy to the faith of God's ancient people,—which inspired with peculiar gladness, the strain of prophetic triumph,—which moved a portion of the heavenly host to leave their seats of bliss, and publish the good news to a world insensible of its blessings,—shall such an event ever be forgotten by us, or the day which celebrates it, suffered to pass by unheeded? or, worse than all, desecrated with unhallowed joy, and made the occasion of carnal mirth and revelry? O No! It is indeed a joyful season,—a season which should awaken every sentiment of humble and holy gratitude;—which should lead us instinctively to the courts of God: there to unite with His Church on earth,—with the Church triumphant in heaven, nay, with angels and archangels, in ascribing "Blessing and honor, and glory and power, unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever."

"Blessed," said our Saviour, "are the eyes which see the things which ye see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." The nature, the cause, and the extent, of this blessedness are all embraced in the words of our text, "And they shall call His name *Emmanuel*, which, being interpreted is, *God with us*." It is my design to call your attention to the propriety, with which this name is applied to CHRIST our Saviour.

1. CHRIST was so called, because in His person was displayed to an admiring universe, the mysterious union of the Divine, with the human, nature. "God was man-

ifested in the flesh," and "dwelt among us." He was "*very God*," as well as "*very man*." All the attributes which belong to the Self-existent, the Eternal,—the Almighty,—the infinitely Holy Jehovah, are claimed by the unassuming, the meek, and the lowly Jesus. He was *very God*. There was nothing wanting in His person, which the believer could wish to find in One, whose arm was to rescue him from eternal death. "In Him dwelt all the *fulness* of the God-head bodily." We must be careful, Brethren, lest our unbelief rob the Redeemer of a portion of His glory. We degrade and dishonor the Saviour, if, in the smallest degree, we make Him less than God. And not only so,—but we rob our ownselves of the only foundation furnished by the Scriptures of truth, upon which we can base our hopes of salvation. You may clothe Him with the glories of an angel, or an arch-angel,—you may give Him a seat in heaven, far above the aspirations of all the principalities and powers of Heaven, yet if you stop short of the throne of God,—if your Redeemer be not possessed of absolute Omnipotence, your hope will fail you in the hour of extremity. It would seem as if the Bible anticipated our want of faith in this glorious truth; and hence it is re-iterated again and again, so that our souls may not build upon the sand, but upon the express assurances of the Word of God. It is a doctrine which the soul, when brought to see its danger, might *wish* to be true, but which nothing, save the revealed testimony of God Himself, could give us any warrant for believing. It is a truth so admirably adapted to the *wants* of the soul,—so wisely fitted to sustain the sinking energies of the sinner pressed by the weight of his guilty convic-

tions, that his faith will not stagger at the *mystery*, but joyfully receive the revealed *fact*, as a most merciful and condescending display of the goodness and love of his pardoning God. To the ear of the sinner who has never felt one pang of remorse for his numerous offences against a God of love,—who has never had those hungerings and thirstings after righteousness which characterize the children of God, there is nothing which sounds more strange, more unintelligible! His eye is fixed solely upon the *mystery*. To him, it is merely a *speculative*, not a *practical*, truth. And hence his inquiries are not, "Where is God my Saviour?" "O that there were some days man between us, who might lay his hand upon us both," but his question is one of cold incredulity, "*How* can these things be?" The wisest of all earth's children never could satisfy such an inquiry. The saint and the sinner must both receive the truth, as a *mystery*.

You may go where you will in this world of ours,—you may enter the counting-house of the merchant, the shop of the artisan, or the field of the husbandman, you will find mysteries, no more capable of being explained by the wisdom of man, than this "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." Can the merchant understand the nature of the winds, which come and go as they list? And yet he unhesitatingly commits to them, his ships laden with rich merchandise. If, instead of thus making use of an agent, whose nature and operations he cannot understand, he were to sit down, with the determination of first solving the mystery of the winds, we should take him for a madman. Does the husbandman understand the process by which his crops

are ripened? Can he tell how it is, that the decaying seed should send up from its bed of corruption, the fields of waving grain, and furnish wholesome nutriment for man and beast? And yet, year after year, he plows his furrows, and plants his grain, with the certainty, under an ordinary blessing, of receiving the fruits of his labor. In so doing, he acts the part of wisdom; the study of a life would never teach him, *how* those things can be. And *his desire to understand* it, is as *nothing*, when compared with the conviction that he must work, or be deprived of his daily bread. He is content to *make use* of the mystery, instead of wasting his time, in endeavors to *explain* it.

Take another illustration, more, perhaps, to our purpose. Two men sit down to a table loaded with the luxuries of a feast. One is famishing for the want of food;—the other has no appetite. The *former* attends immediately to the cravings of hunger. With the instincts of a hungry man, he eats and asks no questions. The other plays the philosopher; and curiously inquires into the chemical combination and proportions of the several articles before him. He puzzles himself with questions which no earthly wisdom can answer, and because, he feels not the necessity which presses so heavily on the other. Now in these several illustrations, you have the difference between the conduct of the sinner, and that of the believer; and also the reasons for this difference. The mystery of an Incarnate God addresses itself to the *necessities* of our condition as sinners. Nothing less than this can furnish an adequate ground of hope; no other than such a Saviour could stand between rebellious man and his offended

God. And when the soul becomes fully sensible of her spiritual wants, and approaches the rich repast in the Gospel, as an *hungry* soul;—when she hears that through faith in the mediation of her incarnate God, her sins may be blotted out, she sees a fitness in the provision,—a glory in the mystery,—an *appropriateness* in the remedy, which swallows up every thought but that of thanksgiving to the God of her salvation. God asks of us in religion nothing more than He asks of us in the common concerns of life. Let the mysteries of religion be treated, as you treat the mysteries to be met in your daily walks, and we shall hear no more about the unreasonableness of faith.

We have then an *Almighty* Saviour,—one who, by virtue of His Divine nature, shed an infinite lustre and virtue upon the sufferings and the sacrifice of the man Christ Jesus. We worship Him as our God. We bear in grateful remembrance the love which induced the Eternal Son to veil the majesty of the God-head in human flesh. We hail Him as our *Emmanuel*, God with us. And though a mystery to our feeble wisdom, we forget the difficulty, in the fitness,—the love,—the condescension, which claim our grateful praise.

But the wisdom of the plan of redemption would be but half developed, if we regarded merely the *divinity* of our Saviour. It is indeed a great consolation to know that we have an Advocate with the Father, possessed of a power, and a wisdom, and a goodness, capable of sustaining the cause of all who commit their interests to His keeping. But we need more than this; we need a Saviour, whose sympathies we can claim, as one touched by the feeling of our infirmities; one whom

we can approach with the sacred familiarity of brethren,—one who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. And here too, God has condescended to our wants. "The Word was made flesh." JESUS CHRIST was *very man*,—in all respects like one of us, *sin* only excepted. He possessed a perfect human body, and a perfect human soul. Like us, He was ushered into this world, a feeble infant, and passed through all the gradations from infancy to manhood. He hungered, and He thirsted: and the sensations produced by the recurrence of these natural appetites, were as real and as keen in the man CHRIST Jesus, as in any one of our sinful race. His frame was subject to the weariness of travel, and the fatigues of exposure. As a man, He enjoyed the attachments, and the sympathies, of friendship. He wept over the grave of Lazarus, and mingled His tears with those of the afflicted family. In proportion as He was sensible of the kindness of His friends, He must have felt the cruel neglect with which He was usually treated. As a man, He suffered,—O how truly!—when the knotted scourge tore His sacred flesh, and the crown of thorns sent the warm blood streaming from His temples. As a man, He felt the torture of the nails which fastened His hands and His feet to the shameful cross, and knew all the agonies of a dying hour. The Bible reveals to us the *humanity* of Christ, in terms just as absolute as those, in which it speaks of His *divinity*. It gives Him all the attributes of a man, as clearly as it gives Him all the attributes of a God. If we keep this in view, we shall see at once, how unreasonable is the conduct of those, who reject the *Divinity* of the Saviour, simply because they find expressions in the Bible,

which represent Him as a *man*. It would be just as proper to deny His *humanity*, because we can bring proof-texts in evidence of His Divinity. A true faith embraces both,—not only as the subject of revelation, but because she sees them to be clearly necessary, to complete the character of the great Mediator between God and man. "For we have not an High Priest," says the Apostle, "who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was, in all points, tempted like as we are, yet without sin. For as much then, as the *children* are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same, that through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their life-time, subject to bondage. Wherefore, in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God,—to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For, in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

I know, Brethren, that it is hard for the pride of human reason to stoop to an implicit faith in *anything;* and there is no doctrine of the Bible, against which she has wielded the weapons of her warfare more sturdily, than the one which we have been endeavoring to unfold. The difficulty lies, as we have already remarked, in treating the question as one which in its own independent nature, is the subject of a philosophical analysis, instead of considering it as a great fact in the system of revealed truth, bearing a very important and essential relation to other parts of that system. If *this* be taken

away, all the fundamental articles of the Christian faith must go with it. It is the key-stone in the fabric; and if you wrench this from its position, the whole will fall into ruins. Of this its antagonists are fully aware; and it is a solemn and painful truth, that in order to sustain their consistency in denying the Deity of CHRIST, they are compelled to deny that He made any atonement for man, and then, of course, that man *needs* any atonement.

Thus you will see that the faith of the believer rests upon this doctrine, not only because God has revealed it, but because of its fitness to answer a purpose in the great scheme of Redemption;—because he sees, that unless it be true, however mysterious, his sins cannot be forgiven, and there is no medium of access to the Father. Pressed with the load of his guilt, he gladly listens to the voice of CHRIST, "Fear not! I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come,—the Almighty." "I am He which liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

It is *safe* to trust the soul to the care of *such* a Saviour!

2. The name *Emmanuel* is properly applied to our Saviour, in reference to the *object to be effected* by His incarnation. That object was a *reconciliation between God and man.* It was to raise the sinner from the guilt and love and slavery of sin, and make him a partaker of the holiness of God, and of the liberties of the sons of God. It was to restore that communion between God and man, which was forfeited in Paradise,—to re-create the soul, which then lost her spiritual life,

and to renew in her those lineaments of the divine purity, which were effaced by the catastrophe of the fall. This purpose was recognised in that song of the angelic multitude, who, at the announcement of our Redeemer's birth, suddenly burst upon the view of the astonished shepherds, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." And good old Simeon too, that just and devout man, waiting for the consolation of Israel,—he recognised it, when, taking the infant Jesus in his arms, he "blessed God, and said, Lord! now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation!" O what a sacredness is thrown around the manger in Bethlehem, when we think that it was the birth-place of Him, whose toils and agonies were to redeem the soul from everlasting death! And the joy with which we contemplate the incarnation of the Son of God, should ever be a joy, chastened with a due solemnity. It should be the joy of a sinner rescued from the bondage of his corruptions,—a joy bearing some faint resemblance to that which swells the anthems of the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven. To save the immortal soul, is a work which can be accomplished by almighty power alone. It is a work which commanded the attention of infinite wisdom, and called into activity the energies of all the Divine attributes. If we look at the achievment itself, at the gracious *result*, it is enough to awaken our undying gratitude. Can you measure the amount of suffering which the soul will endure, if shut out forever from communion with God? Can you measure its capacity for suffering, and that capacity increasing every moment as eternity

shall enlarge and strengthen its powers of endurance? Can you understand what it is to lose forever the privilege of God's blissful presence? It is the light which beams from *His* countenance, that sheds upon this world of sin all its beauty. It is because He is not willing as yet, to visit the sinner with the full outpouring of His wrath, that there is any happiness enjoyed by His ungrateful creatures. It is because His kind voice is heard, in the gracious invitations of His Gospel, that the sinner does not now take up his everlasting and unavailing lament. It is because a *Saviour* has visited this apostate world, and by the shedding of His blood has purchased the means of returning to God, that God waits in much long-suffering and mercy. The way is now open to the mercy-seat. CHRIST has suffered in our own nature to atone for sin; and He now stands at the right hand of the majesty on high, to introduce into the glories of the Father's Kingdom, all who will come unto Him. Behold what a scheme of light and glory has been unfolded amidst the darkness of this sin-benighted world! But "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." O how true this is! How few there are, who see and adore the compassions of Emmanuel! How few there are, who shew that they comprehend and value the design of His visit, by forsaking the sins that brought Him from heaven! How few there are, who tread in that strait and narrow path, which He trod before them! Brethren! if there be any one thing more than another, calculated to teach the important relations we sustain in the universe of God, it is the reflection, that for our sakes, the Son of God became incarnate. Important

indeed must have been the object which led to such a step as this! vast the benevolence! unsearchable the love! And can we be indifferent? Will we suffer every other object to engross our thoughts, save the one great object of saving our immortal souls? Is sin a trifle? can eternal woe be endured? can heaven be lost without a sigh? can you bear to part with every opportunity of mercy? to have the door forever closed against your return to God? It was *our sins* that drew from the Saviour His tears and blood; it was to save the soul from woe that He became like one of us; it was to raise you to the joys of heaven, that He burst the bars of the sepulchre, and is now as a triumphant Mediator extending His invitation, "Come! for all things are now ready!" God is ready to receive all that will come to Him in the name of His well-beloved Son. CHRIST is ready, and more than ready, to wash from their sins, in His own blood every penitent and returning sinner. The Holy Spirit is ready, to sanctify and bless with His enlightening and purifying influences, all who will humbly seek them at the hands of a munificent Saviour. A banquet of rich and spiritual joys is spread before you. Eternal life is offered, and you are entreated to embrace it, not only by the dread of an eternal banishment from the presence of the ever-blessed God, but by the condescension, the tears, the pains, the dying woes, of His only-begotten Son!

Sermon 13.

THE PAST REQUIRED.

(END OF THE YEAR.)

ECCLES. III. 15.—"*God requireth that which is past.*"

A sense of accountability is rarely felt as it should be. Every tendency of the mind is to shake off restraint,—to live as though each one was his own Lawgiver,—as though the past would be forgotten, and the future never be disturbed by unpleasant remembrances. This propensity on the part of man, it may safely be affirmed, is the fruitful parent of much of his sin, and consequent suffering. If any soul should be lost in consequence of such an unhappy delusion, the blame can never be charged upon God. For whilst He has faithfully admonished us of the *future*, He has no less accurately instructed us, as to the character of this *present* life. It is a state of *preparation* for the future. As such, it is clothed with unspeakable solemnity and importance. Our days and hours are crowded with incidents, which

may seem trivial, if regarded simply in their connection with the life which now is, but which assume a fearful significance, when viewed as the seeds of a future harvest. They are the dealings of God with us,—of a God who is to be our Judge,—who will suffer no transaction of our lives to be covered in oblivion, but will confront us with them again, when He shall call us from our graves, to His bar of judgment. "God requireth that which is past."

The subject, Brethren, which is presented by our text, is an appropriate one for our meditations, at the present solemn and impressive season. The last Sabbath of the year has dawned upon us. Its hours can never be recalled,—but they will meet us again, not as hours of probation,—not as moments big with the offers of mercy,—but as God's witnesses, either for or against us, when the judgment shall be set, and the books opened. It becomes us, then, as responsible beings, to reflect deeply and frequently upon the past,—to anticipate, as it were, the day of final account, and see how matters stand between our souls and God, that we may be prepared to render an account of our stewardship with joy. I would ask your attention, therefore, to a brief review of the year which is now just closing.

1. Let us apply this review, in the first place, to our religious privileges, and means of grace.

If salvation be the richest boon of Heaven to a fallen world; if, to be saved eternally, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, be the theme of our gratitude here, and will add new energies to our song of praise in Heaven, then nothing can be deemed unimportant, which will lead to so glorious a result. If the *end* be

important, the *means* to that end must possess a corresponding importance. If they be divinely connected, then a wilful neglect of the one, must lead to a forfeiture of the other. In religion, God treats us as creatures endowed with reason, and with capabilities of exertion. There is no "*royal road*" to eternal happiness, any more than there is to *worldly* prosperity and abundance. It is as true in the one, as in the other, that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich, while the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." And hence the true worshipper of God, replenished with the consolations of the Spirit, and exulting in the hopes of the Gospel, will never fail to offer his tribute of gratitude for the "means of grace," as well as for the "hope of glory." For it is in the faithful use of these means, that this hope is obtained, strengthened, and perfected; and it is in their abandonment, that we are shorn of our spiritual strength and comfort. It will not be difficult then, to perceive how much it depends upon *our fidelity*, whether our spirits are rejoicing in the unsearchable riches of the Saviour's love, or whether we are pining in despondency and gloom,—whether our souls are saved or lost. Oh! how great have been our privileges, how vast and solemn will be our responsibilities! All that we need to know of God and of ourselves, of our dangers and of our duty, has been communicated to us with a clearness and a fulness which leaves us nothing to ask or to desire. The blessed Volume of Inspiration is in our hands, with its treasures of spiritual instruction, warning, and promise. The Sabbath with its hours for meditation,—for Christian communion, and prayer and praise, comes with its weekly blessings, gently inviting us from the cares

of the world,—throwing around us its hallowed stillness, and pointing us to the serenity of that eternal Sabbath, of which this is but the shadow and the pledge. A Saviour crucified,—the hope and joy of the weary and heavy-laden,—is proclaimed as the sinner's refuge. The way to the Mercy-seat is open, through which we may approach to a God who loves to have us make known our wants to Him,—who supplies the needy,—strengthens the feeble-minded, and comforts those who mourn. In public, and in private, amid the congregation of His people, or in our own chosen hours of retirement, we may commune with Him, whom truly to know and love, is everlasting life. Who can estimate the magnitude of such blessings! None, Brethren, but the God who has given them to us. None but He who knows the value of the soul, and in compassion to its wants has provided us a Saviour, and a knowledge of His truth; and from day to day, and from year to year, calls us, by the invitations of His Word and the pleadings of His Spirit, to forsake the way of death, and enter the narrow path of life. He *alone* can tell all the mighty consequences of improving or of neglecting His proffered mercies. From those who have enjoyed them, God will rigidly exact an account of the manner in which they have been improved.

God has been pleased to spare us during the year that is closing; and as we stand upon the threshold of another, we can engage in no employment more profitable than reviewing the past. It will aid in preparing us to meet the duties and the trials of the year that is before us.

What then have been the fruits of your religious priv-

ileges and means of grace? Have you faithfully used them, as the expressions of a tender regard on the part of your Heavenly Father? The same love which led the Saviour to the Cross, has given you the precious Word of Truth,—His Sabbaths, and much besides, well calculated to make you wise unto salvation. But has Heavenly wisdom been gathered from their possession? Have you learned to love the Saviour? to revere His commandments? to engage in His service? Or are you still like the barren fig tree, a cumberer in the Lord's vineyard, and destined, perhaps before another year of trial shall have terminated, to be cut down, and become fuel for the flame! Has the Bible been read and studied, as a message from God unto *you?* Are its precepts regarded? its consolations felt? its hopes indulged? or has it been to you a sealed Book? its pages seldom, if ever, examined? its themes as distasteful, and as little understood, as ever? Has the Sabbath been regarded as a day sacred to the Lord? its hours devoted to the great subjects of the soul and eternity? Has it been a day of rest to the body, and the soul? Have the Ordinances of the Sanctuary been your delight? Has the Gospel of a crucified Saviour been listened to and embraced? Or have you chosen rather to dwell in the tents of ungodliness, than to spend one day in the courts of God's house? to provide for the body, and accumulate treasures upon earth, instead of preparing to meet your God and Judge? Has the closet witnessed your fervent petitions to the God of infinite mercy, that He would not suffer your soul to go down to the realms of eternal death? Nay, has ***one*** such petition crossed your lips, or have you *ever* bent

the knee in prayer to God? And can it be that a whole year of such privileges has passed,—and *all* been neglected? Oh! wonder not, then, that you are still a stranger to the grace of the Lord Jesus. Wonder not that the Bible is to you a Book of dark sayings and that the Gospel of the Saviour is a hidden and inscrutable mystery. "If our Gospel be hid," says St. Paul, "it is hid to them that are lost." A fearful thought; and one which should make every impenitent soul tremble, lest God, in righteous retribution, should already have withdrawn His Spirit, and left you to a deserved and fatal blindness. Let the year which is now coming,—if God should spare you,—be devoted to the soul. Who can tell, but that, before it closes, your body will be rotting beneath the sod, and your soul gone to its place in the world of spirits?

And the subject is not without interest to *you*, my Christian brother, as well as to others. The means of grace are intended not merely to enlighten and instruct the spiritually benighted, but to sustain and strengthen and console the believer. And as long as the days of your prilgrimage shall last, you will need to be nourished from these streams of divine mercy. You cannot neglect them, without detriment to the soul; and if faithfully and properly used, the Spirit of God will richly bless you with an increase in every grace. How is it, then, with your soul? Have you explored more thoroughly the breadths and depths of God's Holy Word? and has the secret of the Lord been more extensively revealed? Has the throne of grace become more than ever, the place of your resort, and communion with your God, sweeter and more profitable than when the year

commenced? Has secret, as well as public, prayer been among your favorite occupations? Have you met God in His Sanctuary? and in partaking of the emblems of the Saviour's love, have your souls been nourished with the Bread of eternal life? Has the thought of death become more welcome? your confidence in the sustaining power of your Redeemer, greater? your hope of Heaven brighter? and can you rejoice in the thought that your salvation is now nearer, than when you believed? If so, give God the praise, and in dependence upon the grace of His Spirit, persevere unto the end. Let another year witness your still increasing strength, your constant approaches to the rest of the Christian pilgrim. But if blasting and mildew have fallen upon you, if you have left your first love, and the world has begun to resume its baneful influence,—O, remember that such things cannot be, without the notice of Him, who hath bought you with His own blood, and who watches with a holy jealousy, every departure of His servants from their sworn fidelity. Remember that God will require it. He *now* requires it. He requires you candidly and devoutly to examine yourselves. Fear not to discharge the duty, as in the sight and presence of your Maker. O stem the current now, lest it become too strong for your resistance. Redeem the time; that if during another year, your seat in this earthly Sanctuary should become vacant, you may join the glad songs of the redeemed in Heaven, and your memory on earth be blessed.

2. Let us, in the second place, apply this review to our *particular* and *individual* mercies.

The foregoing remarks have referred to such dispensations of the Divine goodness, as are common to us

all. The Gospel is a feast of fat things, of which every one is at liberty to partake. The invitation is addressed to every famishing soul—"Ho! *every one* that thirsteth." If the Saviour's grace has been imparted to any soul, in smaller measures than to another, the fault must be with that soul, and not in the want of means or opportunities; and if any have been peculiarly favored with the Divine presence, it may be traced to a corresponding diligence in living near to God, and in supplicating the tokens of His love. The promises of the Gospel are addressed indiscriminately to all. But God makes Himself known and felt in other ways, than in the bestowal of *spiritual* blessings. He is the God of *Providence* as well as of *Grace*. In this department of God's dealings, many, if not all of you, will be able to find some reasons for *special* gratitude to your great Protector. And if your review be guided by a humbled heart, your difficulty will be, not in remembering mercies, but in remembering them *all*. To number them indeed would be impossible. To do it, you must count the moments that have past—every breath you have drawn, every pulse that has throbbed. But have there not been some mercies of a striking and peculiar character? some, perhaps, which might not impress others, but which your own heart knows how to value, and which, at the time, you felt to be very seasonable and remarkable displays of Divine goodness? Have you not been delivered from some threatening danger? some deadly accident, which, had it not been prevented by the hand of God, would have hurried your soul with all her sins into a dreadful eternity? When sorrow seemed about to overwhelm you, and the cloud of afflic-

tion was throwing its dark shadow across your path, and you were girding up your mind for the trial, has He not kindly interposed, and stilled your trembling apprehensions, and wiped away your tears? Perhaps that dying frame of yours has felt more sensibly the symptoms of its mortality, and you have feared that death was about to claim you as his victim;—you knew that none but God could help you, and your secret prayer to Him was, "O spare me a little, before I go hence, and be no more seen!" You felt that you were not prepared to die,—and God saw it too, and in mercy to your soul, He has led you back from the gates of the grave, and you are here, the monument of His forbearing love. Did you not form some resolution at that time, that if the opportunity should be once more yours, you would begin at once the great work of your soul's salvation? God heard that resolution, and He has written it in His book of remembrance, and you yourself will remember it again. When the cold hand of death shall be upon you, your broken vow will be a heavy weight upon your fainting soul. Doubtless there are other instances known only to yourself and God, in which the Father of mercies has manifested His *special* kindness to *you*. O it is a solemn thing, to be thus singled out, as it were, by the hand of God. In the *ordinary* blessings of life, you lose yourself in the multitude, and are apt to forget your *individual* obligations to the Almighty; but when He deals with you alone, and meets with you not in common mercies, but in acts of love, you have an interest which none can feel like yourself; it brings God very near to the soul, and imposes peculiar responsibilities. Such transactions have

in their very nature, a tendency to awaken reflection, to make one feel the existence of that unseen Being who hides Himself behind His works;—and if the impressions immediately induced by them are cultivated and improved as they should be, God will doubtless crown them with the graces of His Spirit. He will not fail, therefore, to require them at your hands. They will enter largely into that account which you must render at the judgment seat of CHRIST. Begin then to deal faithfully with your soul *now*. What have been the fruits of these individual mercies? Have they been remembered? Have they implanted any permanent sense of gratitude, and are you this day striving to render unto God the tribute which He asks for all His goodness? Or are you still insensible, still halting between two opinions,—still unsubdued by the kindness of your Benefactor? It is a fitting time to make these inquiries. This year, nay, this *day*, may be the last in which God will continue His mercies. *To-morrow*, He may begin to lay upon you the rod of bitter affliction. To-morrow! O who can count upon to-morrow? Before the morrow's sun shall *rise* again, the night of death may shroud your soul in eternal gloom. But should you live to see it rise and set for many years, those years to you may be filled with days and nights of weariness and trembling, till existence become a burden. And, worse than all, God may abandon you to unmitigated fears, and when you call again upon Him, there may be none to answer—the day of *mercy*, both for time and eternity, may have closed. O it is no light thing to hesitate upon the question, whether you will serve God or not. Choose ye *this day*, whom ye will serve. If

the Lord be God, follow Him. If He be worthy of your love, then love Him. If His favor be better than life, then seek it, until you find it. If His wrath cannot be borne, then linger not upon the borders of the abyss, till your feet stumble into its dreadful billows!

III. God requires a review of your *sorrows* and *afflictions*.

If some have been *delivered* from suffering, when it threatened to fall upon you—if the uplifted rod has been withdrawn, so that your sorrows have been turned into joy,—I may possibly be speaking to some one or more, unto whom the waters of a full cup have been wrung out. "Every heart knows its own bitterness," —and it would be strange indeed, if *all* had not had their hours of *trouble*;—seasons when everything on earth seemed dark and dreary; when the objects most loved have been removed;—when bright hopes have been dashed,—and the pillow has been wet with tears of disappointment and of anguish. Now a worldly comforter would tell you to try and *forget* all this; and in many cases, the advice is heeded. The lapse of time, —the frivolous, or even the serious, and necessary, avocations of life, may gradually, but effectually, obliterate every remembrance of sorrow. Man is so constituted, that even the keenest pangs of grief will measurably yield to the successive impressions which each passing day and hour are creating. But this is the refuge of infidelity. God would not have you forget these dealings. It would be trifling with Him, and with your best and eternal interests to do so. God afflicts in very faithfulness. He would have you cherish, with the utmost fidelity, every remembrance of the gall and the

wormwood, until it is sanctified to the good of your soul, and the display of His glory. Affliction! What is there like it, to soften the heart, and accomplish the salutary purposes of Heaven? What is there that will so wean us from the world,—its follies and its flatteries, —nay, even its sober business? How instinctively, at such seasons, does the soul turn with loathing from whatever earth can offer! How does the heart yearn for that better world, whose happiness, once felt, is felt forever! "Afflictions then are designed to do us good," and we should labor for a remembrance of them. They are among the things that are past, which God requireth. Have they wrought their intended effect? What benefit have *you* derived from them? They are generally the last method which God takes, to bring the prodigal to Himself; and if *they* fail of their purpose, there is danger that your latter state will be worse than your first. "It is an awful thing to come out of trouble, for it will leave you either better or worse than it finds you." Nothing is so wholesome, if properly improved; nothing so dangerous, if encountered by a rebellious will, and an unhumbled heart. Let the past year then, in this particular, be one of serious review. Try to remember the instances in which God has known your soul in adversity; and bearing in mind the solemn warning,—"He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," try to gather the instruction which is to be derived from the seasons of your darkness and distress. O think not, because the present hour is filled with gladness, that therefore it is well with thee. Your sun may soon be clouded again,—and go down in eternal

night. Another year, with its means of grace, its providential mercies, and its unknown sorrows, lies before you. Are you resolved to spend it as the last has been spent? Shall its days and weeks and months pass to a close, and your soul still be wrapt in spiritual darkness? your heart still unblest with the joys of salvation? Or, shall it witness your reconciliation to God, your union by a living faith to the Saviour? and Heaven be a scene of joy over one more repenting sinner? Need I say that much, very much, depends upon yourself. The plan and means of salvation are finished on the part of God;—and His invitation is, "Come, for all things are now ready."

Sermon 14.

THE PRAYER OF MOSES.

EXODUS XXXIII. 18–23.—"*And Moses said, I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory. And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And He said, thou canst not see My face —for there shall no man see Me and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock; and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in the cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by; and I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back parts; but My face shall not be seen.*"

The text is a portion of Moses' intercession with God, when Israel provoked Him to anger, by making and worshipping the golden calf. Like a faithful shepherd of the flock which God had committed to his charge, the *first* subject of his earnest supplication in that awful emergency, was, that the Lord would pardon the sin of His people. Their exposure to the consuming anger of God, lay like a heavy burden upon his soul, and he not only seemed to forget himself in an absorbing anxiety for their deliverance, but he proceeds, as if in an agony of

prayer, to an expression of his willingness to be excluded himself from the favor of God, if the people, for whose safety he pleaded, might not be pardoned. "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin,—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of the book which Thou hast written." How forcibly does this remind us of One greater than Moses,—the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we might obtain forgiveness and salvation through His blood! God was pleased to give a gracious answer to the prayer of His servant, and then it was that his soul seems to have been drawn still closer to God in a blessed and holy communion. The *goodness* of God, in forgiving the iniquity of His people, not only relieved his heart of a pressing anxiety, but filled him with a spirit of grateful love. In the endearments of a filial spirit, he seems to nestle like a loving child in the very bosom of his God. He could not consent to leave the presence of a Being so full of mercy and compassion,—but prays that *he himself* may now be favored with still larger manifestations of His glory. "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory!"

We have thus brought before us the character of a man eminent for holiness,—the most illustrious type of the Redeemer of sinners. I propose, from what has been said, as well as from the immediate language of the text, to bring to your notice, in the first place, one or two marks of genuine and elevated piety; and secondly, the significant manner in which God answered the supplication of Moses in his own behalf.

1. The first thing we notice in the character of eminent piety, is a comparative oblivion of self, in an earn-

est zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of others. We see this exemplified in the conduct of Moses. His first petition was, that God would be merciful for His great Name's sake, and that He would spare His people; and then, having obtained this request, he enjoys himself a privileged season of gracious intercourse with his Covenant Lord.

True religion, in the individual, must necessarily have its commencement in the formation of personal character, and in the somewhat exclusive enjoyment of those new-fledged hopes, which shed their glorious light over the darkness of a soul delivered from the guilt of sin. The youthful disciple loves to sit at his Saviour's feet, and drink in the instructions, the promises of love and mercy, which flow from His lips. It is his great delight to seek the retirement of his closet; he is apt to forget his connection with a world that lieth in wickedness, in the contemplation of his own happiness, and almost to pray that God would at once emancipate him from the bondage of the flesh, and take him to the full enjoyment of his Redeemer's presence. The thought which we are now proposing, is not to be regarded as conflicting at all with these exhibitions of the soul's first love for Christ. It is suggested rather as a point of Christian attainment, an evidence of the soul's growth and expansion in the Divine life,—an achievement, it may be, lying far along in the believer's path, and to be compassed only by great diligence and culture;—but still we would point you to it as perfectly attainable,—as something in which we are to have an undoubted faith, and altogether consistent with the economy of grace. Neither would we imply that there may *ever* come a period in the

Christian's experience, when he may *neglect* the cultivation of personal holiness, or lightly esteem the necessity of looking well to the state of his soul before God. On the contrary, the feature of character to which we allude, is intended to harmonize with the preservation of every Christian grace in its integrity;—nay, it presupposes them, as the very basis of its own existence. It is the top-stone in the fabric, and cannot hold its place, unless the foundation and superstructure be unimpaired. The language of Moses, in beseeching the Lord, to blot *him* out of His Book, rather than visit His people with wrath, must be regarded simply as the impassioned expressions of an earnest mind. And the Lord seems to rebuke him as having spoken with an improper extravagance; for His reply was, "Whosoever hath *sinned* against Me, *him* will I blot out of My book." To suppose, therefore, that one can be animated with love for souls, and an ardent zeal for the glory of God, whilst he is indifferent to his own salvation, or relaxes his efforts in the pursuit of holiness, is to suppose an impossibility. It is not that for which we are contending; but for that symmetrical development of the Christian character, by virtue of which, each part becomes duly subordinated to the rest;—it is for constant accessions of new strength and grace, but for no relinquishment of a single attainment;—it is for the constant advancement of the soul, till it shall reach the stature of its manhood in CHRIST.

It becomes important to note the connection of this grace with personal holiness, that we may the more readily distinguish it from a zeal without knowledge, which is loud in denouncing the sins of others, whilst one's

own soul is left to the tyranny of remaining corruption. He who would plead for God, must speak, not only in the *words* which the Holy Ghost teacheth, but in the light, and with the force, of an example that is the fruit of His own blessed influences. A genuine zeal for God, is not the artificial heat which is struck out from a mind, only when brought into collision with that which contradicts, or offends it; but it is an indwelling power of the soul, acting in its own strength and animated by a pure and prevailing love for that soul's Redeemer. As such, then, it is commended to your attention; as an attainment in holiness,—as a mark of *eminence* in piety, and as something after which every believer should strenously aim. The *glory* of God is that which He Himself has proposed, as the object and result of all His plans of wisdom and of love. That glory is the song of Angels. The spirits of the just made perfect, echo the song. Jesus died, that God might be glorified in all His attributes. Moses, and the prophets, and the Apostles, labored with but one paramount desire, that the honor of God might be untarnished, and His glory fill the earth. With how much of the beauty of holiness, did this singleness of aim adorn the character of St. Paul! When bowed with years and toil, he stood, as it were, upon the threshold of two worlds, hourly expecting a release from all his conflicts. And as he looked forward with a calm faith to the glories of Heaven, and backward upon a life of continued service, he was in a strait betwixt two, not knowing which to choose,—whether to depart and be with CHRIST, or to remain yet longer, and win souls to God. But one desire seemed to fill his breast, that God might be glorified, whether

by his life, or by his death. Such will be the aspiration of every heart, when brought under the complete dominion of Divine grace. O! there is a holy abandonment of self, which springs, not from presumptuous neglect or indifference, but from the ripeness and the strength of faith, a faith which apprehends with unwavering steadfastness, the sure ground of our salvation; which ever sees in Jesus an ample sufficiency, and an unchanging love. There is a self-forgetfulness, inspired by an absorbing view of the claims of God to our love and service. Have you not felt it, my Hearers, in some transient moment, when the Lord has caused all His goodness to pass before you? O burst, then, the shackles of spiritual sloth; press onward for this prize of your high calling, till in the vigor of a matured faith, and a perfected love, you find it the habit of your soul, to think more, far more, of the glory of your God, than of your own salvation; and to pray and strive for the establishment of His kingdom in the world.

2. The second feature of a truly pious mind, will be found in the character of that blessing, which above all others, it seeks for itself, when pleading in its own behalf. "I beseech Thee," says Moses, "shew me Thy glory." This request of the Prophet, shews that a concern for his own personal interest in the Divine favor, was by no means excluded by a paramount zeal for the honor of God, but was only subordinated to a holier and more elevated emotion. The moments that can be spared from active service in the cause of CHRIST, will be spent in seeking a closer communion with the Redeemer, and in obtaining larger earnests of our inheritance above. And so far as the soul is enabled to rise

above all personal considerations, in its *chief* concern for the glory of Jehovah, there will be a corresponding enlargement of its *desires*, in the great work of its own advancement. The path of the believer at first must necessarily be trod with the trembling steps of an infant, a babe in CHRIST. Faith is weak, hope is uncertain, confidence in God is a fluctuating grace, and so long as the soul is thus agitated by doubts, and fears,—thoughts of self will come in, and engage the attention. When he approaches the mercy-seat, to make known his requests, his prayers will assume a corresponding complexion; and the spirit of praise and thanksgiving will be overborne by a wearing anxiety, lest, after all, he may be mistaken in his hope, or may fail at last of a portion among the children. In our meditations upon God, we are frequently troubled; we think of Him mainly as a Being, from whose wrathful displeasure we are still fleeing, rather than as the Father of our mercies, and the God of all grace. Now so long as this twilight of the soul prevails, it is evident that the sphere of spiritual vision will be very limited. With such imperfect apprehensions of God, and so little confidence in Him, we shall see but little of His glory, and can but seldom, if ever, adopt the supplication of Moses. To enter into his feelings, and to use his language aright, we must have less of the spirit of bondage and fear, and more of the spirit of adoption and love. We must be able to approach God with the unsuspecting confidence of children. Our faith must be planted firmly upon the unchanging oath and promise of Jehovah.—Our hope must be anchored with unwavering steadfastness upon the joys of the blessed; and then shall we

be enabled to stand before God, and look upon His glories, till we ourselves are changed into the same image. For wherein consists the glory of our God? Is it not in the very freeness of His love to sinners? Is it not, that He is perfectly *willing* as well as able, to raise us from the death of sin, to the life and joy of His own eternal kingdom? Is it not that He *will* do this for every believer, and yet remain the same spotless Being, the same just, and holy God? When we can realize all this, in somewhat of its fulness,—when we can plant our feet upon the lofty pedestal of assured faith and hope, then will the thoughts and desires of the soul go forth in a steady stream after God—the God of our salvation—the God of glory. We shall be brought very near to Him, in the bonds of the holiest love; no happiness will be so great as that of standing in His presence, and studying the wonders of His mysterious grace. Instead of being impelled by any slavish fear, every manifestation of His character will draw the soul still closer to Him. The prayer of Moses will be continually upon the lips, "Lord, I beseech Thee, show me Thy Glory." In praying for an increase of faith, and for an establishment of hope, it is true, that the believer prays, in some sense, for this manifestation to his soul of the glory of God;—but it is not in the sense in which Moses sought it. *His* prayer was not the dictate of a trembling and doubting heart, but of a soul already ravished with the splendors of the Divine holiness,—melted and subdued under what he had already witnessed and experienced of the love and condescension of the Infinite Jehovah. *He* sought it much in the spirit, in which the *Angels* desire

to look into these things,—wondering, and admiring God for what He is in Himself,—his soul hungering and thirsting after Him, as the portion of his soul,—as the only object worthy the thought of an immortal being. Let us strive then, Brethren, for this exalted privilege of the believer. Struggle to be free from the cords which bind you to earthliness and sin. Hasten for the confirmation of your soul in every grace of the Spirit, that you may take your station nearer to the throne of God, and live in the beams of His glory. Hasten to drink in some blessed anticipations of that day, when with Angels, and Archangels, and with all the company of Heaven, you shall see Him face to face, and live forever in the full effulgence of His glories.

3. We learn from the text, that there is no height of piety, or attainment in Divine knowledge, which can ever carry us beyond the prayer of Moses.

Who was this, that prayed so humbly and so earnestly to be favored with a view of God's glory? It was not the supplication of one, who was seeking for a blessing, of which he had as yet known nothing. It was Moses, the privileged servant of God,—one who had dwelt with God in the Mount,—who had already beheld such manifestations of His glory, as had never been vouchsafed to mortal man. It was one with whom the Lord had spoken face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend. And yet when he petitions the Almighty for some new token of His favor and love, he can think of no blessing greater in its kind than that which he had already so signally enjoyed, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory!" 'Let me take in larger draughts of that cup of joy, of which I have as yet but tasted. My soul has

never known, nor can I imagine, a greater gift than this. Let me be filled with all the fulness of Thee, my God, and I ask no more.' Here, indeed, must be the limit of the soul's desires. The stream can rise no higher than its source. The creature can mount no higher than to his Creator. Jehovah fills completely the boundless realms of His own Eternity. There is no spot in the height above, or in the depths beneath, to which we may resort, and get beyond the outspreading ocean of His light and glory. And as the soul *can* ascend no higher, so in the enjoyment of God, she has no higher wish or aim. This is her everlasting resting-place,—the home of the burdened spirit, at which the weary pilgrim stops, and begins his song of ceaseless praise. Pause not, my Brethren, in the race which is set before you; seek no other refuge for your griefs and fears, till you can repose in God. There, you will find abundant refreshment and rest. No wave of trouble can disturb the serenity of your peace, so long as you dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. When He condescends to make your heart the Temple of His glorious presence, no other wish or prayer will ascend from your satisfied spirit, save that of Moses, the man of God, "Lord! I beseech Thee, show me more, *still more*, of Thy glory!"

II. We proceed now, as proposed, to the Second division of our subject, viz—the manner in which the Lord answered the request of Moses. If Moses, in the prayer which he offered, expressed a desire that the Lord would make before him a full display of His infinite glory, it may be said of him, as of the diciples in the Mount of transfiguration, he knew not what he said.

And the answer of the Lord may be considered, in such case, as a gentle rebuke of the Prophet's presumption. And the Lord said, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee." It is observable that He does not say, all my *glory*, as Moses had requested. He does not promise to unfold the terrors of His justice,—the unapproachable splendors of His holiness, for this would have been more than any creature can endure;—but, thou shalt see "all My *goodness*." The rest of the passage is in the same spirit. "Thou canst not see My face, for there shall no man see Me, and live." By the *face* of the Lord, we are to understand that undisguised exhibition of Himself, as He is seen by saints, and Angels, in the habitation of His holiness. That, our sinful nature could not behold without instant destruction. In the concluding portion of the text, however, the Lord promises to grant the supplication of His servant, so far as the infirmities of the flesh would permit, by covering him with His hand in the cleft of the rock, whilst the overpowering radiance of His glory passed by, and then taking away His hand, when Moses may safely look upon the receding Majesty of Jehovah. Without entering into the minute particulars of the passage, or considering it distinctly as a typical transaction, it will suffice, to regard it, in its general import, as serving, at least, to illustrate God's tender care and love, in revealing Himself to a guilty world. Separated though we are from God by sin, and deserving nothing but an everlasting banishment from His presence, yet He did not utterly forsake us. He has never left us without a witness of Himself,—some token that He willeth not the death of the sinner, but rather that we

turn again unto Him whom we have forsaken, and live again in the bosom of His love. Such a token we have in the glories of creation; though eloquent of the goodness and the power of God, yet, instead of being the *positive manifestations* of His glory, they are but the *hiding of His power.* They serve *as a veil,* to conceal from mortal eye, Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto. They are but the dim reflection of His glory,—the receedings rays of His brightness, who, when man sinned, withdrew in displeasure, and hid from him the light of His countenance.—For we know that the material creation has shared in the curse which was pronounced upon the first transgressor. On that day when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," we have reason to believe that all this visible glory, by which we are surrounded, shone forth in a manner, and to a degree, of which we can form no conception. But man having sinned, the gold became dim, and the fine gold changed; and though the Lord covered us with a cloud in His anger, and retired Himself from immediate communion with His fallen creature, yet He has left enough to testify of His goodness. The bow in the cloud tells us of mercy in the midst of wrath. The primitive glory of creation was doubtless unfit for man in His degradation and guilt; it was probably more than he could now look upon, and live; and hence the Lord graciously covered him with His hand, till its consuming splendor had passed away, and we are now looking, like Moses, as from the cleft of the Rock, upon the diminished radiance of original perfection and beauty. The world in which we live, and the worlds which move about us, are but

the remains of a departed glory, which the Lord has taken away in His wrath, and yet in how much mercy, both in what He has taken, and in what He has left.—Though we see Him as through a glass darkly, yet we see enough to teach us of His existence, His goodness, and His power,—enough to make us think of something greater than anything we now behold with the eye of sense, enough to suggest to faith, and hope, and love, that new heavens, and new earth, wherein righteousness again shall dwell, and where the Lord himself shall be the light.

But we are reminded by this transaction, of something yet more important, and to which the thoughts of every believer will no doubt instinctively turn.—I mean the work of CHRIST in the redemption and salvation of the soul. We are reminded of Jesus, the Rock of our salvation—smitten and cleft for sinners,—the soul's only Refuge. In the person of Jesus CHRIST, we see the eternal Son of God, the Co-equal of the Father, shrouding in human flesh, the glory which He had with the Father, before the world was, that man might be favored with such a visible display of the Divine attributes, as is suited to his infirmities and wants. In His works and miracles of power and mercy, we see the mild effulgence of the Godhead, beaming forth in the most attractive and winning form. In His accents of love and compassion to the penitent, how plainly do we hear Jehovah again proclaiming His great and Holy Name. And in the awful woes of Calvary, God has indeed caused all His goodness to pass before us,—when the power of His love was seen, in the flowing tears and blood of the Redeemer. If we would see the true

glory of Jehovah, we must discern it by the eye of faith, as it is manifested in the Incarnation, and Life and Death of His own dear Son. If we would stand at last with the innumerable multitude before His throne, we must be found in Jesus, "accepted in the Beloved." "I will place thee in the cleft of the rock," said the Lord to Moses, "and will cover thee with My hand, while My glory passeth by." Blessed, thrice blessed will they be, who shall be thus covered with the protecting hand of the Almighty,—sheltered in the bosom of a crucified Redeemer, when He shall come again in His own glory, and the glory of His Father, and the Holy Angels.

Is the prayer of Moses, my Christian brother, the fervent aspiration of your own heart? Would you see more of the glory of the Lord, as it is not manifested to the world? Seek it in the Lord Jesus, and in His redeeming work of love. Would you grow in grace, till your soul is moved by the noble impulse of a prevailing zeal for the honor, and glory of your Lord? Seek it in the Lord Jesus,—in the freeness of His grace to you, in the largeness of His promises, in those eternal and covenant mercies, which have been sealed by His most precious blood. Would you be presented faultless at last before the throne of the Father's glory? O! cleave unto the Lord Jesus, the only strong hold for the soul,—the only hiding place for guilty man, "when the Lord cometh out of His place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity."

Sermon 15.

REQUISITES OF PRAYER.

(LENT.)

ST. JAMES IV. 3.—"*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.*"

There is no Christian duty, to the performance of which, the believer has received larger encouragements, than that of Prayer. The Saviour, when on earth, manifested a peculiar solicitude, not only in inculcating the discharge of this most reasonable act of religious worship, but also in removing from the minds of His disciples, whatever doubts and fears they might entertain, as to the willingness of God to hear, and to answer, prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." These are words full of grace and consolation. For the purpose of confirming their faith in God's paternal love to

those who humbly seek His face, He makes His appeal to *their* affection for their own offspring. "If *ye* then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much *more* shall your *Heavenly* Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." "Draw nigh unto God," says St. James, "and He will draw nigh unto you." "The Lord is with you," says the Prophet, "whilst ye be with Him, and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you." What promises could be given, more explicit than these! What stronger assurance could we desire, of the perfect willingness of God to dispense the riches of His mercy! Why then, it may be asked, does prayer remain so often, and so long, unanswered? Why is it that the unnumbered petitions which daily and weekly ascend unto the God of all grace, do not bring down the abundance of His blessings, like showers upon the fruitful harvest? The answer is furnished by the text; "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye *ask amiss*." It is not the *formal* petitioner who will obtain the blessing from God. It is not the *careless* seeker, who will find Him; nor will He deign to draw near unto the man, who draws near unto Him with the lips, while his heart is far from Him. If we are taught to ask, we are admonished also, that we must ask aright. If we are encouraged to *seek*, we are also reminded of a condition; "Thou shalt find the Lord, if thou seek Him *with all thy heart, and with all thy soul*." God is the rewarder of them that *diligently* seek Him. "Lord! teach us *how* to pray!" should ever form a part of our addresses to the throne of mercy. The *spirit* of prayer, must accompany the *word* of prayer, if we expect God to hear us, and send us an answer of

peace. To mention everything that is requisite to render prayer effectual, would far exceed the ordinary limits of a discourse. A few, however, of the more essential and obvious elements of successful prayer may profitably be presented.

1. We should ever be deeply impressed with the value of the blessings which we ask.

It will, of course, be understood, that the blessings referred to, are *spiritual* blessings. Though God is the Author of *every* comfort, and though we are completely dependent on Him for every thing that is necessary for the *body*, as well as for the *soul*, yet we are taught to seek *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; to make the salvation of the *soul*, the subject of our anxious thoughts, and prayers, and efforts. For everything else God will provide. The condition of this perishable body is a matter of but little moment, if *eternal* interests be secured. It is for this that we are to *ask;* for this that we are to *seek;* and it is this that God promises to bestow, in answer to fervent and unceasing prayer. But to pray for this aright, we must have adequate *impressions* of the "unspeakable gift of God." If our conceptions be unworthy of the subject, our petitions will be few, and cold, and feeble, and we shall, therefore, ask amiss. But if the heart be warmed by just apprehensions of the "exceeding great and precious promises" of God,—if we have an adoring sense of His infinite condescension,—of the riches of His grace through the Redeemer, and of that eternal weight of glory, which is to be the believer's portion hereafter, our desires after these things will assume a corresponding strength, and our prayers will ascend

with frequency and fervor, to the Author of our eternal salvation. We shall pray aright; and He who feeds the hungry soul with fatness, will answer us according to the urgency of our requests. It is infinite condescension in God, that we are permitted to approach Him in the language of prayer; it is because His compassions fail not, that He suffers us to plead for mercy. Any favor at His hands, is more than the sinner has a right to expect from the Being whom He has often provoked by his offences. Behold then, the matchless bounty of our God! Not only does He save us from the unquenchable fire; but the treasures of eternity, all that boundless love can bestow upon a creature, are offered for our acceptance, and promised to our prayers. Contemplate, for a moment, the magnitude of these blessings. Think of the glories of that world,—that Heaven of eternal rest,—the joys of the ransomed spirit. Think of an everlasting redemption from all that you can either fear or suffer,—of being exalted to an equality with Angels,—nay, to greater bliss than ever Angels knew. Think of being made completely and forever holy,—of dwelling forever beneath the smile of God,—with "every longing satisfied; with full salvation crowned." What mind can measure, or what tongue express, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him! They are such as the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard; neither hath their full conception ever entered the heart of man. But God hath revealed them to us, in *part* at least by His Spirit; and by a vigorous faith, we can, at times, anticipate, in a measure, what is meant by the soul's eternal salvation. And these are the blessing, which we are taught,

and encouraged, to ask of God in prayer. Oh! it is for no small favor that we plead—but for benefits which the infinite Mind alone can duly estimate. And when we approach Him with our petitions, we should endeavor to form adequate impressions of this truth. Then will our prayers be acceptable, and God will give us largely of the earnest of our inheritance. But if our desires after the things which God hath promised, be but feeble, we cannot hope to receive any thing at His hands. We may ask, but we shall not receive, because we shall *ask amiss*.

2. A second requisite of acceptable prayer is, a conviction of our entire dependence upon God for every spiritual blessing. A due realization of that dependence, tends to keep the soul in an attitude of unceasing prayer. We have already seen, that consistent views of the magnitude of the blessings sought, will necessarily quicken our desires after them, and add fervor to our requests; but if with this, there be connected a clear and child-like sense of our utter inability to enjoy, even the least of these mercies, except as *God* shall bestow them, our prayers will be more frequent and importunate.

Prayer is emphatically the language of helplessness. Strong desires after an object may impel us to active endeavors in obtaining it; but we shall labor in our own strength, until we feel our perfect weakness, and kneel as beggars at the feet of Christ. The Almighty holds at his own righteous disposal, every good and perfect gift. Not a holy thought, or inclination, or act exists, but as the fruit of His bounty. Every hope that sustains us, every consolation that soothes us, proceeds from the

inspiration of His Holy Spirit. With Him are all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. If He withhold them, the soul is impoverished and ruined. If He impart them, we are strengthened with all might, and enriched with every grace. The condition of their free bestowal is Prayer, but we must pray *aright;* our petitions must be prompted by a sense of utter helplessness and dependence; by a conviction that from God, and from God *alone,* must come our help; that in us dwelleth neither *strength* nor goodness; and that if *God* give us not the blessing, there is no other source from which we can hope to obtain it. This is the spirit which God will honor and bless, for it is that disposition of mind which honors Him, by directly and practically acknowledging His Almighty power and sovereignty. With such impressions of helplessness abiding upon the soul, God's blessing would be *earnestly* sought in prayer, by all such as longed for that blessing. Prayer would no longer be a burden. The soul would cleave to this means of grace, as the sinking mariner to his only hope of safety. Who can forgive your sins but God? Who but He, can impart to your anxious spirit, the blessed assurance that your sins *are* forgiven? Who but He, can give you the full joys of salvation? Who but God, can keep you from doubts, and fears, and despair, and shed upon your path the light of Heaven, and bear witness with your spirit, that you are the child of His adoption? It is He that must sustain you in your Christian walk, and give you the victory at last. Bear all this in mind, when you kneel in prayer, and then your prayer will not be an empty formality; it will proceed from a heart in earnest, and God will listen, and He, who delights to strengthen

the feeble, and to exalt the humble, and to supply the needy, will open the treasures of His grace, and liberally bestow His gifts. Bear this in mind, and you will no longer walk heedlessly in your own strength, restraining prayer before God, but "as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their master, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so will *your* eyes wait upon the Lord, *your* God, until he have mercy upon *you*."

3. Another requisite of acceptable prayer, is a profound sense of our *unworthiness*.

The method of salvation proclaimed by the Gospel, is intended, in all its parts, to magnify the *free grace* and *mercy* of God. It is a salvation provided by infinite love, not only for *needy* and *dependent* creatures, but for the *guilty*, for those who *deserve* not the compassion of God, but whose sins might justly doom them to utter condemnation. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His *mercy* He saves us." This is the great doctrine which lies at the foundation of the Gospel, and the spirit of which, pervades every portion of the Word of God. It is a trust in the *mercy* of God, which can alone inspire us with any confidence towards Him. The moment we begin to mingle with the simple scheme of mercy, any notions of our own merit or worth, that moment our peace will be disturbed, our hope become darkened. For then, we are no longer looking for salvation by *grace*, but are striving to be, in *part*, our *own* Saviour. In such a frame of mind, we shall either not be able to come with *boldness*, unto a throne of mercy, or else we shall approach with the vain confidence of the Pharisee. We should come with

the self-abasement of the Publican pleading for *mercy*, and in order to obtain that mercy, our very argument must be, "Lord! I am vile, *pardon* mine iniquity, for *it is great*."

It is this profound sense of our *unworthiness* which is most acceptable in the sight of God. "The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit." "The high and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, dwells with the contrite and humble spirit." Such is the spirit of *all* of God's declarations. They are addressed to *sinners*, calling them to repentance. They are addressed to the fallen, the wretched,—the guilty,—the perishing; to such as feel that they deserve to be outcasts from His favor. O! it is to such that the invitations of CHRIST are extended; it is to such that the *promises* are given. Such alone will obey the invitation; by such alone will the promises be esteemed as "exceeding great and precious." It is in *this* temper of mind, that the soul will *love* to draw near to God, and contemplate the wonders of His grace and love, and plead His own encouragements, and triumph in His *mercy*. And God will hold communion with such a soul. Not a sigh will be unheard, nor a petition disregarded, nor a tear fall unheeded. Acceptable prayer will then be made to Him, whose ear is ever open to the cry of penitence, and whose arms are ever extended to embrace the returning prodigal. We cannot abase ourselves too low before God, when we approach Him in prayer. We cannot have too keen a sense of our guilt and unworthiness. If prayer be the language of helplessness, it is no less the language of *unworthiness*. We shall ask *amiss*, just in proportion as we are deficient in this profound abasement. For it

is in that proportion that we rob the Redeemer of His glory. Jesus and His worth must be all our plea. Our souls must be washed from the stains of guilt, in the blood of CHRIST. We must behold the Mercy Seat sprinkled with the same precious blood. We must behold before the throne, our Advocate with the Father, Jesus CHRIST the *Righteous*. Helpless, guilty, unworthy, CHRIST must be our helper, our only way of access to the Father. Our prayers must all ascend in the name of Jesus, and then we shall pray *aright*, and our prayer will be answered. For the Father loveth the Son, and whatsoever we shall ask in *His* name, that will he do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If then, we would feel the preciousness, and the all sufficiency of CHRIST as our great Intercessor with God, let us cultivate a deep and habitual conviction of our own unworthiness. If we would pray acceptably to God, let this conviction prompt our supplications. Let us repel as a spiritual pestilence, the encroachments of a self-righteous spirit, and not be satisfied with *faint* impressions of our utter unworthiness, lest we should ask *amiss*.

4. The last requisite of acceptable prayer which we shall mention, is *Faith*.

The importance of Faith, as an element of acceptable religious service, is largely insisted upon in the Bible, and illustrated in a multitude of instances. It enters so materially into the very substance of our religion, as to give it its *name;* it is called the *Faith* of the Gospel. St. Paul triumphantly exclaims, when near the end of his course, "I have kept the *faith*,"—which is but another mode of saying, "I have continued a steadfast Christian." It is by *faith*, that we are justified; through *faith* that

we are saved. The Saviour, in performing His miracles of mercy upon the sick, and the afflicted, did usually draw from them first, an expression of their *faith* in His ability to perform their requests. And when the sick man was healed, or a case of distress relieved, "Go thy way," was the Saviour's direction,—"thy *faith* hath saved thee." When the disciples failed in performing a miracle, it was ascribed by our Lord, to their want of *faith*. "According to your *faith*, be it unto you," is His own declaration; thereby assuring us, that every thing depends upon the vigorous exercise of this fundamental Christian grace. The same emphasis is laid upon faith, as the condition upon which God will hear and answer prayer. "All things," said the Saviour to His Apostles, "whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive." "If any of you lack wisdom," says St. James, "let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in *faith*, nothing wavering." A word of caution, however, may be necessary, against a misconstruction of these passages of Scripture. We are not to suppose that *every wish*, of whatever character, that may chance to spring up in the mind, may be turned into a prayer, and that then, by an endeavor to *believe* that God will hear us, we shall have our requests. This would be fanaticism, and very far removed from the meaning of the Saviour, and His Apostles. The *Word* of *God*, and his *promises*, are to be the guide of our desires, and of our prayers to Him. We are first to enquire, and to discover from the Bible, *what* God has *promised* to bestow in answer to prayer. What has He taught us to pray for? *This* must be made the subject of our petitions,

and not any suggestions of our own, and then, by a trustful, steadfast *faith* in His *promise* to hear and to give, we are to make known our wants, with that perseverance and importunity, which are so much commended in Scripture. The *will* of God must be the *substance* of our prayer, and our *faith* must be suspended upon His *promise*. Mark the language of St. John: "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask any thing *according to His will*, He heareth us."

And what has God promised to bestow in answer to prayer? He has *not* promised you an abundance of the good things of this life. He has not promised that the strait and narrow path, which He has called you to tread, should not be attended with pains, and afflictions, and tribulations. But He *has* promised, that all those things shall work together for your good, and that "though many be the afflictions of the righteous, the Lord will deliver him out of them all." He has promised His own Omnipotence to sustain you, under your burdens, bidding you not to despair, but to look to the Lord, for strength and deliverance. He has *not* promised that you should not have dark hours, and fearful temptations, and many struggles with the powers of darkness, and indwelling sin; but He has promised, that if you put your trust in Him, your darkness shall be turned into light, the tempter be defeated in his assaults upon the soul, and yourself be ultimately "cleansed from all unrighteousness." He *has* promised, that if you "*endure unto the end*," every foe shall be vanquished, and Heaven's bliss more than repay the toils of the conflict. In a word, He has promised *freely* to bestow every spiritual blessing. The *strength*, the *teachings*, and the blessed

consolations of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, are vouchsafed to the prayers of his people *here;* and the full joys of a complete redemption, as the theme of their praise, hereafter. Such is the heritage of the believer. Such are the promises of God. For these things we are to *pray;* but we must pray in *faith,* not doubting His willingness to give them.

It is not without reason, that God has annexed this condition to acceptable prayer. For what *human* benefactor will not feel himself dishonored to have his *word* doubted, his promise *distrusted?* And when God speaks, should He not be believed? His gifts are indeed of incalculable worth, and not one of our sinful race can deserve them. But God has *promised* them to those who ask them for His Son's sake, and when we ask for them, we are but asking the God of truth to fulfil His own pledge. We shall "ask amiss," therefore, unless we ask in *faith.* God loves to be trusted and believed. Trembling, doubting believer! if thy faith be small, remember that the blessing will be small. Do thy sins alarm thee? Great as they are, they are not so large as the promises of God. Let faith take hold of the promise, and urge your suit with undoubting confidence in God, and then you will ask aright ; and God, who delights to bless, will visit you with His grace. If faith be weak, let the burden of your prayer be, "Lord! I believe, help Thou mine unbelief."

Such are a few of the requisites of successful prayer. A due sense of the value of the blessings which we seek from God,—of our utter dependence upon God for them, —of our utter unworthiness of the very least of them,— and the exercise of an intelligent and unwavering faith

in the promise of God to hear and answer the petitions of those who ask in His Son's name, are indispensable elements of prayer, at *all* times, and under *all* circumstances. There are occasions, however, which call for the special exercise of these gracious emotions of the soul, when a more vigorous and conquering faith is demanded, and when the prayers of God's people should be more fervent and importunate. Such a season is the present, which commences with the services of this day.* Our own individual wants can only be justly known by ourselves, and the Searcher of hearts. They can be felt and realized, only by a resolute retirement now and then, from the occupations of a transitory life, and by fresher and stronger impulses of the Divine Spirit, in the secret transactions of the closet. Let it not be thought a formal, superfluous provision of the Church, that calls you at this season, to unusual acts and exercises of devotion, but embrace it, for the purpose of adding to your Heavenly treasure. If you are indeed seeking *first*, the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, you will not need this exhortation. Your own hearts will lead you gladly to the Mercy Seat to hold communion with your God and Saviour,—to seek for grace to support you,—for the consolations of the Spirit to uphold you in the hour of trial, and of death.

And pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Remember the desolations of Zion. If ever again we shall experience the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, it will be in answer to the supplications of His people. "Thou shalt arise," says the Psalmist, "and shalt have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favor her, yea, the set

* Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent.

time, is come; for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof." While you remember your own spiritual interests, at a throne of Grace, let your heart expand with the larger sympathies, which should animate a member of the Body of CHRIST. Let the spirit of the weeping captive pervade every prayer. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem! let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,—if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." "Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger?"

Sermon 16.

FREE GRACE.

St. Matthew x. 8—"*Freely ye have received, freely give.*"

These words form a part of our Saviour's commission to His Apostles, when He first sent them forth to preach the Gospel. To the ear of an instructed, established Christian, capable of sympathizing with the sublime characteristics of the religion he professes, they will convey a heart-stirring, irresistible appeal. If among the Redeemer's followers, there be one who can listen to them with indifference, unmoved by the touching view which they present to us of Christian obligation, it becomes him to pause and "examine himself, whether he be in the faith." It becomes us *all*, Brethren, to study well the import of our Saviour's language. For so completely does the text unfold to us the unsearchable riches of God's grace, that if we really imbibe its spirit and meaning, every hallowed emotion of the soul will, of necessity, be awakened and invigorated. With a view to

so desirable a result, let us attend more closely to the Redeemer's words.

"*Freely* ye have *received. freely give.*"

Here we have the announcement of an important truth, coupled with the injunction of a corresponding duty. It will be our object to enlarge upon each of them.

And 1. The fact which is announced,—***Freely*** ye have *received.*"

Our religion possesses many absorbing points of reflection, each and all of which, when fully appreciated, are adapted to inspire solemnity and gratitude. The recollection of that wrath from which he has been rescued, fills the Christian with a holy fear and trembling, and he seeks with renewed anxiety, to secure his retreat beneath the overshadowing wings of a pardoning and covenant God. When, with the eye of faith, he penetrates the regions of his promised Rest, and beholds there scenes of unutterable bliss, his spirit will sometimes long to break away from this tabernacle of earthliness and sin, and join in the services and anthems of just men made perfect!

But, elevated and reviving as such topics of meditation are, they do not, by any means, furnish the subject of the Christian's *deepest* gratitude. Strange as it may appear to some, the religion of a crucified Redeemer supplies a source of still purer and more exalted emotions. If the believer were impelled to habits of obedience by no motive superior to the mere hope of final salvation and eternal happiness, his character, when tested by the measure of the Gospel standard, would fall sadly short. We do not pretend to assert that

the expectation of an ultimate triumph over all the miseries of the present, of a deliverance from the fears and perplexities of this shifting and probationary state, into the peaceful and permanent joys of a "kingdom that cannot be moved," must not enter, as an element, into the formation of his hopes. The Lord has graciously scattered over the pages of His Truth, motives and encouragements, of every grade, for the purpose of winning the rebellious, and of sustaining the sinking energies of the weak in faith. And there are moments in the life of perhaps every Christian, when the flagging spirits, borne down by the infirmities of the flesh, or failing to maintain a *uniformity* in the apprehension of the higher doctrines of our faith, are compelled to take refuge in some of the *subordinate* sources of encouragement. But the soul is not doomed to be *always* thus crippled. Frequently is it her privilege to soar with an almost unfettered freedom, and to live and move and act under the impulse of holier and more disinterested motives. To such a motive, our attention is directed by the words which we are now considering. "*Freely* ye have received." Observe,—Our Saviour does not remind His disciples of *what* they had received. He does not speak to them of thrones and dominions. He does not attempt to stimulate their exertions by pointing them to a *rest* from their labors, a treasure laid up for them in the heavens. All these may, and should, possess their *legitimate,* though *subordinate,* influence, in constraining the Christian to the performance of his duty. But our Saviour rises *above* all these, and fixes our attention upon a *nobler* consideration. He carries us above the *reward,* to the *principle,* upon which it is be-

stowed. *Freely, freely* ye have received it. Here, Brethren, the soul must stop in its attempts to scan the glories of redemption. It can ascend no higher. *Grace*, the free grace of God, is the last, the loftiest theme of the believer's meditation. When steadily contemplated, it fills and overwhelms the soul. It requires all the sanctified energies of the Christian to seize upon even a small part of the stupendous subject here; and eternity will be too short fully to disclose its wonders.

Let us dwell, for a moment, upon the importance of *realizing* this truth.

That we are saved by *grace*, is a doctrine, not only prominently taught in the Sacred Scriptures, as an independent truth, but may be said to run through the whole texture of the Word of God. It is the Alpha and the Omega of the Christian's hopes, the source of his earliest joys, and also, of his final triumph. It is a clear perception of this truth, as it dawns upon the sinner's spiritual darkness, that first effectually dispels his fears, and gives him confidence towards God. And it is a dependence upon this same truth, which enables him to smile in the embrace of death, and to enter the unseen world, rejoicing in hope. But between those two important epochs in the Christian's history,—his spiritual birth, and his birth into Glory,—it is to be feared that he too frequently loses sight of this great principle of his faith. Not that he ever erases it from his creed, or would shrink from becoming its zealous advocate, if assailed by the craft of heresy, or by the violence of open unbelief; but that he fails in retaining and cherishing such a vivid *impression* of the free grace and mercy of God in his redemption and salvation, as to make it the distinct

source of habitual gratitude, and a primary motive of his conduct. Take a faithful review of your own experience, Brethren, and see whether the apprehension we have expressed, be entirely unfounded in your own case. Is it not true that many a time since you first tasted that the Lord was gracious, and threw yourselves upon His mercy in CHRIST, the joys of redemption have been known, chiefly as the dimly-remembered vision of a past experience? Why is it that the soul, instead of vigorously thriving in the green pastures, and beside the still waters, pines and languishes, and so often heaves the sigh of a longing regret, "O that I were as in months past!" Many minor causes might undoubtedly be assigned for this,—many that your own fidelity will readily detect: but one main cause we take to be this,—that you have abandoned your *first source* of comfort,—that you have resorted to comparatively broken cisterns, that can hold no water. We wish to be distinctly understood, Brethren, and would therefore carry you back once more to the days of your first love. What was it that first excited your love? What first awakened the accents of gratitude and affection, and emboldened you to cry, in the spirit of adoption, "O Lord! truly thou art our Father." It was not any captivating pictures of the pageantry of heaven, its rivers of pleasure,—its golden thrones,—the happiness of its innumerable hosts of worshippers. All these have their proper place, as *streams* of consolation, but they are not the fountain. No! what you sought for *then*, was some *warrant* to lay claim to all these, and to call them your own. The mere *contemplation* of them could not give you the needed assurance: it might excite a wish, but could supply no

ground of *expectation*, or of *hope*, that you should ever possess them. And it was not until your burdened and trembling soul caught the accents of redeeming GRACE,—until you could look upon your offended God as a *pardoning* God, saving you *freely* for CHRIST'S sake, that you felt the first impulse of gratitude and praise to God, and knew the true meaning of spiritual joy. Now it is from this exhaustless fountain, this *well-spring* of salvation, that you are *ever* to draw the waters of comfort. It was not opened to furnish a momentary and a fitful supply. It was never intended that we should take but one single draught at the setting out upon our pilgrimage, and then abandon its copious and healthful influences, for the scanty and doubtful sustenance of inferior joys. To do so, is plainly to separate the cause from the effect. The inevitable consequence will be *leanness, sickly doubts and fears;* or else, a criminal indifference, and a false security. Here, Brethren, is the secret of the misgivings in many a halting believer.

In thus reverting to the early operations of the new-born soul, and inculcating a regard for a fundamental principle, let it not be thought that we are laying the foundation for a dwarfish religion; and that by lingering upon one of the first principles of the doctrine of CHRIST, the Christian is placing a bar to his growth in grace, and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour. No greater error can be entertained, than to suppose that the first, simple, humble, child-like exercises of the babe in CHRIST, are to be exclusively appropriated to that period of the spiritual life;—that, in advancing to our manhood, we are to abandon these for some imaginary traits of character, more suited to the vigor of an estab-

lished Christian. As in the natural, so in the spiritual life, our maturity must consist in the perfect development and complete consolidation of the first elements of our being.

It is an equal error, to suppose that the *truths* which commend themselves to the unsophisticated feelings of the young Christian, are to be exchanged, so far as their *paramount influence* goes, for others of a more mingled and questionable character. For, those early truths, and those early feelings, as before intimated, are as closely connected, as cause and effect; and if we would preserve the integrity of the latter, we must retain a distinct apprehension of the former. And what better evidence can we have that there is *something* in our early experience, peculiarly suited to protect and develop the energies of the new man, than the fact, that with the regularity and directness of instinct, the soul, under a consciousness of decayed strength, turns in pensive recollection to the days of its first love! Brethren, the true cause of spiritual dearth in the Christian, is, that he suffers the first lively sensibilities of the soul to degenerate into mere *impressions*,—to dwindle away into faint, flickering aspirations, instead of *cultivating* them, under the SPIRIT'S blessing, and moulding them into the manliness of a matured character. These remarks are peculiarly applicable to the point we are now discussing. Whatever intensity of emotion may be awakened when the *free* grace of God is revealed to the humbled sinner, much is unquestionably to be attributed to *animal* excitement, and the *novelty* of the subject. If we abate these, it will be found, that the spiritual views of the believer, as to the real, essential glories

of this mystery of love, in its application to his case, are but very meagre and partial. He has much yet to learn of his own character, of the depravity of his own heart, and much, in consequence, of the infinite compassion and condescension of God. Salvation by grace! Oh, it is a subject which enlarges in moral magnificence, the more we study it! It is impossible to advance in holiness, to obtain brighter views of the character of God and juster views of our own unworthiness, without a proportionate amazement that HE, the Just and Holy One, should stoop *so* low, to save the sinner. Think for a moment, that not only have we *nothing* to recommend us to God, but that when we were living in a state of actual *rebellion* against Him, He so loved us as to give His own Son, to suffer and die for us: and all, SO FREE, that whosoever will, may come and share the blessings offered. All that He asks of us is, that we will *love* Him,—surrender our affections to Him, and seek His glory evermore.

2.. But again:—the apprehension of this principle, on the part of the Christian, serves also to preserve and strengthen *all* the graces of the SPIRIT; of which we wish to notice one or two of the more obvious ones.

The *first* is humility. It may be questioned whether the soul of the penitent is *ever* truly humbled, before it has been led to cast itself upon the pardoning mercy of God for salvation. There is much, it is true, in the previous exercises and struggles of the inquiring sinner, which bears the semblance of humility. There is much of a perception and an acknowledgment of the evil and demerit of sin, and the justice and holiness of an offended God. There is much, too, of self-condemnation. But

amid all this, the old leaven of a proud, unhumbled spirit is at work. Other grounds of hope,—other refuges are resorted to, rather than that only Name given under heaven, whereby he can be saved. And that shows a spirit far removed from true Christian humility. The grand efficient power which can produce this grace, has not yet been applied. The only influence to which the mind of the convicted transgressor has thus far been subjected, is the denunciations and the rigid demands of an unbending law. And there is nothing in its language which is calculated to produce humility. All that the law *can* do for the sinner is to lead him from step to step, till it lands him in the blackness of despair; but *despair* is not *humility*. Otherwise, there would be a pulse of sympathy between the devils and the redeemed. No! it is not amid the thunders and flames of Sinai, that the sinner bends in lowliness and brokenness of spirit before his God. He flees as tho' the avenger of blood were behind him, till his footsteps are arrested by the milder glories of Mount Zion, and the still small voice of mercy. And as he turns to Calvary, and looks upon a suffering, dying Saviour: as he hears amid expiring, convulsive agonies, the whisper of peace from those quivering lips, then it is that his heart of stone is melted. And as he prostrates himself at the feet of his bleeding Redeemer, O *then* is his soul humbled, viewing, as he does, in the same moment, the magnitude of his own guilt, and the riches of pardoning mercy. It is well that the sinner should feel, and deeply feel, his exposure to the wrath of God: but the *grace* of God,—a free, entire forgiveness, procured by the blood of an innocent Sufferer,—

this, this it is, that subdues, humbles, disarms the proud spirit: and whilst it infuses the life-blood of hope into the soul, draws him with the cords of love, a weeping, submissive penitent, at the footstool of his Lord. It is often thought that when the convicted sinner catches a glimpse of his Saviour, and begins to entertain a hope of pardon, his penitence gives way to the fulness of his joy. It may be so for a moment; but if he be rightly affected, it will be but for a moment. Surely, in the Cross of CHRIST, there is cause for a deeper penitence, —a profounder sorrow for sin, than could ever be awakened by all his previous fears. It is at the Cross alone, that he beholds the full extent and enormity of his sins: and were it not for the accents of mercy which mingle with the groans of an atoning Saviour, the sight would do infinitely more to overwhelm the transgressor, than all the fierce and wrathful exhibitions of Sinai. Christian! if you would wish to cherish a true spirit of humility,—a hearty sorrow for sin, think how *freely* you have been forgiven; think of Him who bore your sins in His own body on the tree, that he might rescue you, a brand from the eternal burnings.

3. Another advantage in cultivating a distinct impression of God's free grace is, that it furnishes a channel of *direct intercourse* between the soul and God.

It has already been intimated that the consideration of God's free grace, in the pardon and salvation of the sinner, is by far the noblest and most disinterested motive by which we can be animated. It is a motive suited to the highest spirituality of feeling, as well as intellectual energy. And the reason is obvious. *God Himself* is clearly the most interesting and glorious object,

upon which the mind can meditate. Never is the soul bathed, as it were, in such an atmosphere of sanctity, as when led by a train of abstracted and unembarrassed thought, to lose itself in the contemplation of His all-absorbing glories. But this glorious God is a being, whom *we* can contemplate, only through the medium of His attributes, and the principles with which He deals with us. It is impossible to think of these principles, in all their solemn connections,—to cherish a distinct, personal association with the plans and purposes, the very *thoughts* as it were, of Jehovah, without a lively sense of the being and presence of Him, who is invisible. These plans and purposes are but the analysis of His character: they are the separate, individual features of His character, which collectively make up to our minds, all that we can conceive of God. To apply this to the subject before us,—How is it possible to realize so exalted a conception as the free, unmerited forgiveness of sin, procured for us at such an infinite expense, —without instinctively connecting so noble a principle of conduct, with some exalted intelligence? For such a thought as the one just mentioned, awakens all the deepest emotions and sympathies of our nature; and we can have no sympathies with naked principles. No! a present God will be felt, and we shall be elevated at once into a constant communion with the Father of mercies and the God of all grace. It is not so with every topic of reflection suggested by our religion. True, we should think of nothing that enters into the hope of a Christian, without associating God with it, and *enjoying* Him in it, as the *supreme* object of our affections. But there are many things which engage the believer's

thoughts, in which it is not so easy and natural to do this. And it was for the purpose of illustrating this, that we have presented the foregoing reflection.

Are there not some, whose views of a future state amount to but little more than a Mohammedan paradise? Who lose themselves in fond reveries and dreams about the felicities of another world,—whose imaginary heaven is but little else than an endless duration of undisturbed enjoyment,—no pain, no sickness, no fears, no death. All these will indeed be included in our promised inheritance. But it will be observed, they are either of an indefinite, or negative character. They are not *all* of heaven; neither are they of its essence. It is as *moral, intelligent, and spiritual* beings, that we are all to live hereafter, and as such, we are to reap a happiness in kind. It is with angels and glorified spirits, that we are to mingle our sympathies;—with a Redeemer, who has purchased us by His blood:—with a God of glory, in whose image we were originally created, and upon whose glory we shall be permitted to gaze, till changed into the same image, from glory to glory. You may meditate upon heaven, upon the vague thought of endless happiness, of freedom from every trial, until your soul is moved to an extasy of feeling, and yet *God* may not be in all your thoughts. The stream of your reflections, instead of passing on, until it is lost in the ocean of fathomless love, returns with its shallow and turbulent current into your own bosom. *Self* may be, after all, the idol which you worship. O Christian! think how unworthy you are of the great things that God hath provided. Think of Him who bestows them so freely. Think of the Redeemer, who left that world of glory to

make you a joint heir with Him of a bright inheritance. Anticipate the day, when you will think so much of *free grace*, and so little, in comparison, of your crown,—that crown, which you will cast at the feet of your munificent God and Redeemer.

Let us pass on, in conclusion, to a brief consideration of the duty which is enjoined,—"*Freely give.*"

Active exertion in the cause of CHRIST, a life of real usefulness, is, at once, the Christian's *duty* and his *privilege*. In this, as in all the commands of God, there is a blessing connected with obedience, which will return, a thousand fold, into the Christian's bosom. Too often, however, is it considered, even by the Christian, *less* as a *privilege*, and more as a *duty;* and instead of sympathizing with the devoted Paul, when he spoke of the *constraining love of* CHRIST, the disciple is dragged as it were, into the service of his Redeemer, by a slavish sense of obligation, when he should be rejoicing in an opportunity of showing forth the praises of his God. The injunction of the text, together with the motive contained in it, aims directly at the defective, unfilial spirit now referred to. "*Freely* give,"—as freely as ye have received. We are regenerated into the image of God; the same spirit of benevolence which actuates Him, should actuate all His children. God sets Himself forth as our pattern, and we are permitted to emulate the conduct of Him who is the personification of all excellence. But how little is such a privilege valued! Who would gather from the daily life of many of CHRIST's followers, the nature and the magnitude of that work which has been given them to do? How seldom does the Christian himself duly realize it! And one reason is,

that we reflect so little upon the chief motive that should stimulate us—"*Freely ye have received.*" The power of this motive, when suffered to exert its full influence upon the soul, transcends every other. I might tell you of the magnificence of the enterprise,—*a world to be saved!* and you appointed as instruments of its accomplishment. I might tell you of your responsibilities,—of your having been constituted, in some sense, the keepers of immortal spirits around you, upon whom your influence is to tell for good or for evil, throughout the ages of eternity. I might appeal to your natural and to your Christian sympathies, and point you to a parent, a brother, a sister, a relative or friend, and speak to you of the worm that never dies, and I might then lay before you, your own bright and imperishable hopes of glory and ask, if here were not enough to arouse you to unwearied effort to snatch them from perdition, and carry them with you in your train to heaven. But I can tell you of a nobler inducement still. There is One who loves them infinitely more than you can. There is One who has travailed in soul for them and for you,—has poured the rich treasures of His grace into your own heart, that you may be His stewards in conveying it to others. He asks you for *His sake*, to be a co-worker with Him, that He may see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. O can it be that you expect, as it were to-morrow, to tread the courts of heaven, and attune your harp for eternity, to the strains of redeeming, pardoning grace, and is the note of gratitude so feeble here? Are you willing to pass on thus with your inheritance in view, and suffer the priceless, undying souls about you, to drop into the abyss of woe, for the

want of fidelity on your part, to them, and to your Redeemer? Will you be so niggard of those streams of salvation, which flow by you so freely, from the very heart of God? O if we be CHRIST'S, let us seek to show more of the mind of CHRIST. If we expect to reign with Him, let us be diligent in gathering the jewels for our crown, that, at His appearing, we may shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever!

Sermon 17.

CHRIST AND HIS CROSS.

(PASSION WEEK.)

ST. LUKE, IX. 30, 31. "*And behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory, and spake of His* DECEASE *which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.*"

These words are a record in part, of one of the most remarkable transactions during our Lord's ministry. On a certain occasion, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.—And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering. And behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of His *decease* which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. This event is called our Lord's Transfiguration, when, for a brief period, He laid aside the form of a servant, and for the edification of His disciples, and the strengthening of their faith, He temporarily assumed that glory with which He was to be permanently crowned, when He should sit down upon His mediatorial throne. Our

present design, however, is not to dwell upon this main feature of the transaction, but to confine your attention to one of its most important and significant incidents. Two men, Moses and Elias, appeared in glory and talked with Him; and the theme of their conversation was the decease of Jesus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.

The first point which claims our consideration is the persons, and the character of those who came from Paradise to commune with the Son of God, during this brief manifestation of His divinity. They were *men*, and not angels. There was a peculiar propriety and significance in this. It was for us men and for our salvation, that CHRIST came down from Heaven, suffered, died and was glorified. The whole of the stupendous work of Redemption had reference to the recovery of *man* from the degradation of sin, and his exaltation to the glories of Heaven, and an eternal communion with His reconciled God and Father. As it was not the angelic nature which CHRIST assumed, nor the angelic nature which suffered, so it is not the angelic, but the human nature, which, in the person of the Redeemer, is crowned with a far more than angelic glory and honor. It was fitting then that *glorified men*, and not angels, should be the companions of their Lord, in those few moments of His anticipated triumph over the grave, and over the powers of darkness. It was fitting, too, that His humble disciples, who were yet to be the companions of His sufferings, should be eye-witnesses of His glory. To Moses and Elias, it was the transient realization of that which they, in common with Prophets and Kings, had waited for, but died without the sight. To

them, it was the earnest and foretaste of that "eternal weight of glory," which they were soon to share with their exalted Redeemer. And whilst their feelings must have been those of holy exultation, and of sympathy with CHRIST in His approaching triumph, the scene was not without its lasting benefits to the three disciples who went up with Him into the mount. Though terrified at the time, and probably ignorant of the full meaning of what they saw and heard, yet they afterwards remembered it, and it served not only to strengthen their faith, but to give weight to their testimony, when, after their Lord's Ascension, they went forth, preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And undoubtedly the Transfiguration took place before them, that by the mouth of those three witnesses, every word of the Divine message might be established. The beloved disciple refers to this privileged season, when in declaring the Divinity of CHRIST, he fortifies the declaration by an allusion to what he and his companions had personally seen. "And the WORD" he says "was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and "we," he adds in a parenthesis, "beheld His *glory*, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father." And St. Peter seeks to strengthen his testimony by a still more unequivocal allusion. "For we have not," he says, "followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus CHRIST, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father, honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory,—'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And this voice from Heaven *we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.*"

The fact then, which we are now noticing, is plainly not one of an indifferent nature, but full of meaning, and of comforting instruction to us. How strictly in accordance with the Divine plan of mercy to sinners, that Jesus, in one of the few seasons when He rejoiced in spirit, should choose to gather about Him a little band of His ransomed flock, instead of being attended by a retinue of angels, and listening to their hymns of praise! It shows that He, who condescends to call Himself our Elder Brother, will never, even in His highest glory, lay aside this gracious distinction. He has vindicated His claim to this title, by the assumption of our nature, by the tears of Gethsemane, by the shame and agonies of the Cross; and now that He has risen far above all principalities, and powers, and every name that is named, whether in Heaven or earth, He esteems it still His chief glory, to be the believer's Advocate and Friend. Not even the loud hosannahs of Heaven can separate us from the undying affections of Jesus. He remembers us, even there, where every tongue is eloquent in His praise. He stoops from the throne of His glory, to hear our prayers, and to wipe away our tears, to shield us against temptation, and to give us gracious consolations in the hour of sorrow. He ever liveth to intercede for *us*. And when the great work of His redemption shall be finished, and His saints shall be gathered into the Church triumphant, we shall be nearer and dearer to the heart of Jesus than the angels, who never fell. As God over all, Blessed forever, He will listen with satisfaction to ascriptions of praise from every creature. But *most* welcome, will be the *new* song that will be sung by the ten thousand times ten

thousand of the redeemed,—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God, by Thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us unto living fountains of waters."

Again; it was not only proper that *men* rather than angels, should attend upon our Lord as the witnesses of His glory,—but there was a peculiar propriety in the selection of Moses and Elias. Moses, as the Law-giver of the Jews, stood at the head of that dispensation to which the Jews were blindly attached, and which was now upon the eve of passing away. His authority was unlimited with that abandoned nation. However much they misunderstood his instructions, and the transient nature of the economy he instituted, they were fond of appealing to him, and of calling themselves "Moses' disciples;" and more than once, they refused obedience to CHRIST as their Messiah, on the score of a preference for their ancient leader. It was right that Moses should be regarded by the Jews with a high degree of reverence and affection. His name was inseparably connected with all the details of that imposing service, by which they and their fathers had been taught to worship Jehovah, and an adherence to which had secured for them unnumbered national blessings and distinctions. Every sacrifice that was offered, and every act of worship, whilst it pointed to a greater than Moses, must necessarily have reminded them of this eminent servant of God. They had been taught, too, by their

own Scriptures to revere him as the greatest of all those guides and teachers, whom God had ever sent to instruct them in their duty, and to deliver them from their enemies. But there was *One*, and one only, to whom even Moses must yield the pre-eminence. That system of laws and ordinances, of which he, by Divine direction, had been the founder, was intended as a schoolmaster, to lead both him and his people to CHRIST. In CHRIST, as the great and only effectual sacrifice for sin, was fulfilled all that was signified by the blood of bulls and of goats. As our great High Priest and Intercessor with God, He was about to abolish the gorgeous ceremonial of the Levitical Priesthood. In a word, all those types and shadows, with which the name and authority of Moses was identified, was about to be absorbed by the glorious substance and reality of all, CHRIST, the Lawgiver and Head of the Church,—our only Priest and Sacrifice,—the true Mercy-Seat for sinners, the only way of access unto the Father. There was, therefore, a profound significance in the attendance of Moses, during our Lord's display of His regal power and Godhead. He was there, in the presence of CHRIST's humble followers, to lay all his honors at the feet of their common Master; to teach them, and through them, the Jewish nation that CHRIST was their Judge, their Lawgiver, their King and Saviour; to teach them that there is no *other* name given under Heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus.

There was a corresponding significance in the attendance of Elijah, or, as he is here called, Elias. He was the most illustrious of all the Prophets,—distinguished

by a peculiar mark of Divine favor in being carried to Heaven in a chariot of fire. As the representative of that long line of Prophets who had foretold the Redeemer's advent and glory, he was fitly associated with Moses,—that thus they might bear their joint testimony to the Divine mission of Jesus—that He was the one of whom Moses and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. He was there too, with Moses, to signify, that in CHRIST were united all the ancient offices of Prophet, Priest, and King.—And as the Lawgiver pointed to CHRIST, as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, so the Prophet indicates Him as our great Instructor in Divine truth,—who alone hath the words of Eternal Life. And all this received the solemn sanction of a voice from Heaven;—for out of the midst of that bright cloud which enfolded CHRIST, and this little company of His disciples, God the Father gave forth His own testimony to the truth of all, "This is My Beloved Son, hear ye Him." This is My Beloved Son, my co-equal and My fellow, who alone hath authority and power to reveal the counsels of Heaven to a revolted world. This is My Beloved Son, whose obedience and death for sinners, is sufficient to ransom from *eternal* death, every believing soul. Hear ye Him,—for in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. In Him all fullness dwells.

This admonition, with the circumstances under which it was uttered, was designed for the instruction of the Church through all time. O what a resplendent crown of glory does it place upon the brow of our Redeemer! Patriarchs, Prophets, and Kings, were but the heralds of

Jesus, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. The costly furniture of the Temple, the rivers of blood, which, for centuries, had flowed at its altar, and all the bright visions of Prophecy, were but the dim foreshadowings of His excellency, whose glory fills the Heavens, and is yet to fill both Heaven and earth. Remember it, my Hearer, as you open the Word of God. Seek for the guidance of the Spirit, that you may discern CHRIST upon every page of the Sacred Volume, from its beginning to its close. And above all, exalt Him in your heart, as deserving your best homage and love. Let the righteous sentence of a broken law, lead you to cleave the more closely to CHRIST. Hear Him, and obey His instructions, for to whom else can you go, if you turn away from Him, by whom alone Life and immortality have been brought to light?

2. The second point which we are to consider, is the theme of conversation between CHRIST and His glorified saints; "they spake of His *decease* which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem."

No single circumstance could give a more striking prominence to the *death* of Jesus Christ, as the central truth of our religion, than the one which is here, with so much brevity, brought to our notice. The glory with which CHRIST and His servants were invested, seemed for the time, to be forgotten in the interest of the subject which now engrossed their attention; and well might this be so; for that glory was the fruit of the sufferings of the Son of God. Jesus Himself assumed the Mediatorial crown and throne, as the reward of His obedience unto death, upon Calvary; and it is by virtue of the same atoning Sacrifice, that the Captain of

our salvation will bring many sons unto glory. We are thus most effectually taught the importance of the doctrine of the Atonement. Every other doctrine of Scripture receives its significance from this. Even the Incarnation of our Lord, though proclaimed by Angels, and accompanied by the songs of Heaven, was but a preliminary step to the consummation of the great work of Redemption. It could, of itself, have effected nothing for the salvation of man, had not our Incarnate Redeemer poured out his blood as a sacrifice for sin. The manger of our Lord, and the Throne of His glory, are alike indebted for their meaning to the profounder glories of the Cross. It needs but a slight inspection of Scripture to verify this assertion. If we turn to the dispensation of Moses, we find that the first covenant was not dedicated without blood. It was the blood of the Paschal sacrifice, that opened the door of deliverance from Egypt. It was the feast of this gracious Passover, which was instituted as a perpetual memorial of Israel's God, throughout all their generations. In the services of the Tabernacle and the Temple, each morning and evening witnessed the blood of the sacrificed victims. "Almost all things were by the Law purged with blood." The typical High Priest, and the Mercy-Seat which he approached to seek the favor of Jehovah, were both profusely sprinkled with atoning blood. However adorned with its silver, and its gold, neither the Tabernacle, nor the Temple, would have served as fit emblems of the glory of the God we worship, had they not been sanctified by the blood of unceasing sacrifice. And if we turn to the New Testament, we shall find a like prominence given to this all-important doctrine. In

the very *commencement* of our Saviour's ministry, John Baptist "spake of the decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem," when he pointed Him out to his disciples as the *Lamb of God*, which taketh away the sin of the world. Jesus Himself, in the instructions which He gave His followers as to the nature of His salvation and kingdom, embraced every opportunity to speak to them of His approaching sufferings. And as the hour drew near, Oh! with what a pathos, with what intensity of emotion, did He commune with His disciples! With what meltings of soul, did He tread His lonely way to the sorrows of Calvary! I need not depict to you the scene of our Saviour's sufferings upon the Cross. The strong crying and tears of Gethsemane, the Angelic succor which was afforded Him,—the opening tombs,—the trembling earth, and the darkened Heavens, were sufficient evidence that the *death* of CHRIST was the crisis of a world's redemption. It was the glory of the Cross, which inspired the soul of St. Paul. CHRIST, and *Him crucified*, was the unvarying theme of his discourse. It was the love of Him who had *died* for him, that constrained him to endure poverty, reproach, and death.

With reverence would we pass from earth to the equally significant transactions of Heaven. What is it that gives energy to the praises of the Church triumphant? What is the burden of her everlasting song? Is it the glory which encircles her? Oh no! Even there she remembers the travail of her Redeemer's soul, and with one united voice, as the sound of many waters, ascribes all "power and honor and glory and blessing unto the Lamb that was slain, and that redeemed her to

God by His blood." The atonement of Jesus Christ for sinners, by the sacrifice of His life upon the Cross, is the theme of the Angels' song, and of the saints in glory. It was sufficient to bring two of them from Paradise to converse with our Saviour, upon His decease that was drawing near; and its absorbing power was such, that even the glory which shrouded them, was for the time, a disregarded thing, and they dwelt with holy interest, upon the approaching scenes of Calvary. Moses and the Prophets, CHRIST Himself, and His Apostles, unite in holding up the Cross to the view of a guilty world. All of them point to the broken Body, and the shed Blood of the Redeemer, as the greatest, the most wonderful, of Heaven's mercies to our fallen race. And can any one, then, believe that the death of Jesus was merely the death of a holy man, of a martyr suffering for his creed? that His meekness, His patience, His unquenchable love, was merely an *example* of suffering affliction? As an example *simply*, it demands our admiring imitation; but Oh, we must see something far more than this in the death of CHRIST, if we would praise Him as we ought on earth, or join the anthems of Heaven. What means that superhuman sorrow in the Garden, which bowed in agony, and dotted with blood, the body of our Lord? Jesus was innocent,—His soul was spotless and free from sin,—a guilty Conscience could have had nothing to do with those moments of anguish. Whence then, that mysterious shrinking,—that heart-rending prayer, that if it were possible, the cup might pass from Him? It was the burden of *our* guilt, my friends, that pressed upon the soul of CHRIST. It was for *our iniquities*, that He thus submitted to be bruised and smitten

of God. It was in those hours of darkness, amidst suffering and tears, that Jesus was making it possible, by His atoning blood, for the sinner to be justified and saved. By submitting to the death of the Cross, he was entering the gloomy realms of the grave, that he might assume the dominion over it, and lead captive the powers of darkness. It was the hour of hell's disappointed malignity. It was the triumph of Almighty love and mercy to sinners.

Well then might the death of CHRIST be a subject of interest in Heaven. Would that it might excite a corresponding interest in each one of our bosoms! Behold, my hearers, your Saviour! Behold the only way of access for yourself, unto the Father,—the only way of salvation, the only door of entrance to the purity and happiness of Heaven! Has the fear of God never yet fallen upon your spirit? Has the thought of the Judgment, and of eternal retribution, never troubled you? Has conscience never warned you of the wrath to come? Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST, thy crucified Redeemer, shall give thee light. Be aroused by the afflictions and death of Jesus, to see in how awful a manner, the wrath of God has been revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness.

Have you ever been humbled under a sense of guilt? Have you ever felt the arrows of the Almighty within you, and his terrors setting themselves in array against you? Behold *your* Saviour! His blood is precious in the sight of God, as an atonement for your transgressions. Come unto CHRIST, and cast your burden upon your Lord, and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall

be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Once more; the death of Jesus was a *voluntary* sacrifice: one to which, however painful, He willingly submitted, as the voluntary substitute for sinners. This thought also is clearly contained in the language of the text. Moses and Elias spake with Jesus of His decease, which *he was to accomplish* at Jerusalem. The work of redemption was one, which the Son of God, as the second person of the eternal Trinity, undertook and accomplished in the might of His own Omnipotence,—in the fullness of a Divine sufficiency. It was an act of agreement, and of love, in the counsels of Heaven, for the soul's salvation. "Lo, I come; in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God!" It was on this ground, that the sacrifice of the Cross was an acceptable offering in the view of Heaven. "Therefore," says the Saviour, "doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." "Thinkest thou," he says to the impetuous Peter, "that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me twelve legions of Angels? The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Oh! here is love, deathless love, shining forth from every feature of this glorious transaction. Behold once more, *your Saviour!* What was it, that sustained Him under the bereavements of a life of penury and toil? It was love for *you*. "Though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you, through his poverty, might become rich." Why was it,

that when reviled, He reviled not again? Why did He give His back to the smiters, and hid not his face from shame and spitting? One look of power from the suffering Redeemer would have been sufficient for His deliverance. But these were a part of the price of your redemption, and Jesus suffered them meekly and willingly, that He might save you from the deeper dishonor of sin, and exalt you to glory and honor. It was the same unquenchable love for the soul, and the joy that was set before Him in the sinner's salvation, that led the Son of God to the agonies of the Garden and the Cross. And will you let Him die in vain? Shall Heaven exhaust all its treasures of power, and of love, to save you, and yet will you persevere in sin and perish?

"O more than merciful! whose bounty gave
Thy guiltless self to glut the greedy grave!
Whose heart was rent, to pay Thy people's price,
The great High Priest at once, and Sacrifice!
Bless'd Saviour! by Thy Cross and crimson stain,
Let not Thy precious blood be spilt in vain!"

Sermon 18.

A HAPPY RISING BY ANY MEANS.

(EASTER.)

PHILLIPPIANS, III. 11. "*If by* ANY *means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*"

If these words were considered by themselves, and an attempt were made to interpret them irrespective of the context, and of all that the Apostle had elsewhere written concerning the resurrection, it would be impossible to arrive at a meaning, consistent either with the Apostle himself, or the declarations of other parts of Scripture. "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Can it be, it might be asked, that by these words, the Apostle means to express a doubt of his own rising at the last day? Could he have intended to sanction the unscriptural notion that the resurrection of the body is a privilege, confined to the believer, and that no others are to be called forth from their graves? This cannot be admitted without making the Apostle plainly contradict himself. He has empha-

tically taught us, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead—both of the just and the unjust. We cannot, therefore, admit that St. Paul doubted his own resurrection, without placing him at variance with himself. To discover his precise meaning, it will be necessary to look at the context.

It was the great effort of St. Paul, in his Epistles to the Churches, to represent the intimate union which existed between the believer and CHRIST. By the life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Saviour, he illustrates the changes, and ultimate destiny, of all who are united by a living faith to CHRIST. Such will be conformed to the Saviour, in all of these particulars. As He lived, so will the believer live. Did he suffer? so must the Christian suffer. Did he die? so must the believer die; not as the unbeliever dies,—for the former will sleep in Jesus. Did he rise again, and ascend with His glorified body into Heaven? so also them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him, to a happy and glorious resurrection, to be ever with their Lord, in a union still more intimate, and never to be interrupted.

That this was the resurrection to which the Apostle referred, and after which he was striving, will appear from the previous verses: "Yea, doubtless," he says, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win CHRIST, and be found in Him;" "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if, by any means, I might

attain unto the resurrection of the dead." As though he had said,—it is my earnest wish and effort, to be, in in all respects, like CHRIST. I do not expect to be glorified together with Him, unless I first suffer with Him. And that I may attain this blessed result,—that when I rise from the grave, this vile body may be changed, and made like unto the Saviour's glorious body, I have renounced *all* for Him, that I may win Him,—that I may be found in Him,—be conformed to His sufferings, yea, even to His *death*, if by *any* means, I may know the power of *His resurrection* also, and thus have all my conflicts crowned with an everlasting triumph.

All shall rise from the dead. But, as all do not live and die in the Lord,—as all do not sleep in Jesus, so all will not feel the power of *His* resurrection. They will rise at the summons of the last trump,—but having lived and died, apart from CHRIST, strangers to the Saviour's grace, they will awake to hear the sentence of an everlasting separation from Him.

It was, then, a *happy* resurrection which the Apostle contemplated,—the *Christian's* resurrection,—that last change which shall take place in the destiny of both soul and body,—and after which the believer shall be confirmed in holiness and happiness forever. In this point of view, it is the same as if the Apostle had said, "If by any means, I may secure the salvation of my soul."

Considered in this light, the words of our text suggest some important reflections.

I. They disclose to us the value which St. Paul placed upon the soul's salvation. It was not with him a speculative admission, a cold assent to a doctrine,—the bare

yielding to an irresistible conclusion;—nor was it an acknowledgment made with reluctance,—a truth to which the judgment bowed, but against which the heart rebelled. He embraced it with every faculty and affection of his soul, as a subject demanding his first attention, and worthy to take precedence of all other claims. The world was, in his view, but a very small spot in the vast universe of God;—and all connected with it, when contrasted with the boundless and permanent interests of eternity, were like a dream,—a shadow, a vapor that appeareth for a moment, and then vanisheth away. It was a settled and lasting conviction,—taking its place among the sober realities of his existence, and not merely the product of a melancholy hour, or the result of disappointment, and disgust with the world. Whether the world smiled or frowned, he seems never to have forgotten its worthlessness,—never beguiled by its allurements, or dismayed by its threatenings. His faith brought the glories, and the solemnities, of the invisible world around him. He steadily kept his eye fixed upon the hour of death. He contemplated that hour, in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth, some to the resurrection of damnation. He followed the soul onward to the judgment-seat, and listened, in anticipation, to the sentence that should then be pronounced. He remembered that the soul is immortal, and will be forever rising higher and higher amid the glories of Heaven, or sinking deeper and deeper in the bereavements and woes of hell. Amid such reflections as these the Apostle *lived*. Eternal realities were not the subject of a passing thought,—an unwelcome *interruption* to *accustomed*

occupations; but they formed the motives of his daily life, and led him to exclaim, "I count all things but loss, that I may be found in CHRIST,"—"that I may know the power of His resurrection." I am willing to be partaker in the fellowship of His sufferings, yea, even to be conformed unto His death, "if, by any means, I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead." In all this, St. Paul felt and spoke, as every one of us should feel and speak. The same ransom has been paid for *our* redemption. We must stand with him before the same tribunal. We shall join with him at last, in the same song of praise, or shall mingle our lamentations with those of the lost. Are *we* regarding these facts according to the estimate of the Apostle? Does the salvation of the soul occupy the *first* place in *our* thoughts? Is it the willing subject of our daily contemplation? Do the solemn scenes of the resurrection,—the judgment, and eternity, force themselves upon our attention, as an unwelcome intrusion? Do they interrupt us amid what we conceive to be more important business? And when they come, are they soon dismissed? Let me remind you that the world is passing away, and will soon be gone. Its comforts melt beneath our touch. Every step of our progress to the grave diminishes their value, while the importance of the soul's salvation *increases* with every step. The *soul* will live forever. Its safety,—its present and everlasting welfare, should therefore be the subject, upon which you lay the utmost stress. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

II. Not only did St. Paul's judgment recognize the supreme importance of the soul's salvation, but he felt the necessity of acting in consistency with so solemn a

conviction. "If by any means I might attain." These words are expressive not only of effort, but of great effort,—of vigorous and enduring toil. The Apostle was no stranger to the doctrine of grace. He was its great champion, and fearlessly proclaimed it, among those who would, as he knew, abuse the doctrine. But at the same time, he strenuously inculcated, both by precept and example, the duty of "working out our salvation with fear and trembling." "Give diligence," he writes, "to make your calling and election sure." And none can read the life of this eminent servant of God, and not admire the noble daring,—the unflinching resolution,—the unbroken and consistent energy, with which he pressed toward the mark for the prize of his high calling. He fought, like a soldier *struggling for the victory*. He watched, as one who knew that he walked amidst snares and dangers and malignant foes. He measured the importance and the reasonableness of exertion, by the priceless value of the soul,—its capacity for enjoyment, and for suffering, and by the incalculable consequences resulting from success or defeat. This is the Christian's truest logic,—the best and the highest reason for Christian effort. Whatever we truly value, will certainly call forth exertion;—and our exertions will correspond with the estimate we place upon the object of our toils. "I keep under my body," writes St. Paul, "lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." We cite this passage as evidence, that he who attributed all that he was, or hoped to be in eternity, to the mere grace of God, thought it not inconsistent to urge upon the believer, the duty of being a co-worker with God. The spiritual idler will

be sure to reap the idler's harvest. "Well done, good and *faithful* servant," are the words to be addressed at last, to every heir of heaven. Let us imagine these words addressed to any one of ourselves, and compare them with our diligence in the service of our Master. How do they sound, when we contrast them with what we have done for CHRIST, and with the evidence we are daily giving of our love for spiritual employments? We do not wish to represent the joys of Heaven, as the reward of the believer's merits; but would urge the reflection, that a comfortable persuasion of our being indeed partakers of the grace of salvation, will be greatly in proportion to our fidelity in discharging the duties of a Christian life. If we love the Saviour, we shall delight to do whatever He has commanded. And if Heaven be prized, as it should, the soul's final safety will be the object of our grateful solicitude. The means of grace so wisely provided, will not only be used, but used with a diligence and earnestness, commensurate with the end we have in view. Prayer, then, should be the fruit of a travailing and earnest spirit,—of a soul wrestling with her Maker, and resolved not to let Him go, without a blessing. Let your meditation upon heavenly things not be a dreamy, unavailing effort,—but persevere until you have caught something of the spirit, and can breathe the atmosphere, of heaven. In reading the Scriptures, search them, as one who is digging for hid treasures—and the Spirit of Truth will unfold to your understanding, the wonders of His law. And so in all the other means of grace;—in attending the services of the Sanctuary,—especially in partaking of the Sacramental Feast, and in every thing that you do for CHRIST, let it appear

that you place a proper value upon the soul's salvation. In a word, *earnestness* should characterize the Christian's spirit,—an earnestness inspired by the scenes of that last great Day, when heaven and earth shall pass away, and CHRIST shall mount His judgment Throne. Shrink not, then, from any thing that may serve to strengthen your hope of final salvation, "if by *any means*, you may attain unto" a blessed "resurrection of the dead."

III. Finally. The words of the Apostle imply an *entire resignation* to whatever methods the wisdom of God might employ, in qualifying him for future blessedness.

We have already seen that his feelings and his actions were the counterpart of each other, and that if he spoke with enthusiasm, or with solemn earnestness, he evidenced the sincerity and strength of his persuasions, by a corresponding energy in his labors. But this was not all. He manifested the steadfastness of his faith, and his anxiety to finish his course with joy, under circumstances far more trying, than the simple discharge of his public and private duties. He was not only Paul, the unwearied servant and Apostle of the Lord Jesus, but he was Paul the *afflicted*. He not only met with courage the difficulties and mortifications incident to his position, as the preacher of a despised Gospel, but in "much weakness," and under "many infirmities," he manifested the obedience of a son, by an entire submission to the will of God. In the opinion of one of the greatest captains that the world has ever known, "the first quality of a soldier is *patient endurance*;—valor," he says, "is but a *secondary* virtue." The truth of this

maxim will commend itself to every thoughtful mind. There is something in the shock of the battle-field, and in the excitement of immediate conflict, that has often sustained even the soul of a coward, and transfused into his spirit a something that was mistaken for courage. The man who has sought death at the cannon's mouth, has trembled like a child as the king of terrors made his silent approaches to the sick bed. Hundreds have rushed impetuously into the midst of carnage, who have basely forsaken their standards, when hunger and thirst, and cold and nakedness, and wasting disease, have invaded the inactivity of the camp. They were not prepared by "*any* means" to achieve the victory. It was in this department of the Christian's conflict, that St. Paul exhibited his heroism, and showed his supreme regard for the issue of the struggle. He was a man of like passions with other men, and lest he should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the visions and revelations of the Lord, there was given him a "thorn in the flesh," the messenger of Satan, to buffet him. It is impossible for us to know what this peculiar affliction of the Apostle was; but we know that it was a severe trial to his patience and resignation. He could fight with beasts at Ephesus, and fearlessly encounter the prejudices of the Jew, and the contempt of the Gentile, and the encounter seemed only to nerve him to a bold defiance, and to brighten his anticipations of a future triumph. When he was going bound in the spirit, unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that should befall him there, save that bonds and afflictions awaited him, he could exclaim with the confidence of Christian faith,—"But none of these things move me,

neither count I my *life* dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus." But when the hand of *God* was laid upon him, and he felt the pressure of an affliction, whose fretting and consuming power followed him from the busy world, even to the secret chamber,—when his hours of solitude, which probably had once been his only refuge from the storms without, became disturbed by the ceaseless corrodings of a foe, with whom he could not grapple, then, even the soul of the Apostle bowed under the dispensation, and he became as a "weaned child" in the hands of God. We no longer hear the shout of the soldier rushing into battle, but from his place of prayer, we hear him, in the accents of subdued and earnest supplication, repeatedly entreating the Disposer of events, that he would remove from him this affliction.—"For this thing," he says, "I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me." But his prayer was not the prayer of complaint, or of murmuring, but of perfect resignation to the will of God. For when the Saviour answered, "My *grace* is sufficient for thee," we once again hear from this servant of CHRIST, more than the language of submission.—"Most gladly," he says, "will I rather glory in my *infirmities*, that the power of CHRIST may rest upon me; therefore I take pleasure in infirmity, and in distresses for CHRIST'S sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." How closely, in this respect, was St. Paul conformed to the sufferings of his Master. Thrice did the Saviour pray in His agony, "Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me! Nevertheless, not My will but *Thine*, be done."

Such was the unfeigned sincerity of St. Paul, when he professed himself willing, "by *any* means," to attain unto a blessed resurrection. Are you ready to follow him, even as he followed CHRIST? If you have not been already called to exhibit the grace of *endurance*,—a quiet submission to the will of our sovereign God, it is more than probable, that before you reach the haven of your eternal rest, God, in his faithfulness, will purify you in the fires of affliction. You may place a high value upon the soul's salvation, and love to contemplate the glory which shall be revealed in the saints. You may be active in the service of CHRIST, and may take great delight therein, and yet you may not be prepared for the hour of suffering affliction. Oh! there is something in this last trial of the Christian's strength, under which he must either bend, or break. To *rejoice* in suffering, that the soul may be saved, and CHRIST be glorified,—this is the index of a soul, desirous by "*any means*," to know the power of the Saviour's resurrection. If bereavement comes, and from your embrace is taken the dearest object of your affections,—if friends forsake,—if worldly comforts leave you,—if sickness, and pain, and distress, and days and nights of weariness are appointed you, regard them as the means by which your spirit is to be ripened for eternal joys. Look onward to the bright and glorious morning of the Resurrection, when you shall take your place among those who have come up out of great tribulations, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. O who can wonder that the suffering Christian, in view of so blessed a termination to his conflicts, should adopt, the earnest prayer of the beloved disciple, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." But the time is

short. Be ye all patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

My impenitent hearer! you must die, and be buried: and at the command of the Son of God, you must come forth from the grave, and be judged by Him, who has the keys of death, and of hell. I need not ask whether you feel prepared for the solemnities of that tribunal. So long as you live in impenitence,—a lover of the world, of its business, or its pleasures, more than a lover of God, you cannot be prepared for death, nor for a joyful resurrection, nor for the employments of the redeemed. If you be not united to the Saviour by the power of a living faith, you cannot be supported by His presence in the hour of death: and you must lie down in solitary corruption,—not to sleep in Jesus. And when you shall be awakened from the slumbers of the tomb,—if you be not found in Him, your defenceless soul will call in vain upon the rocks and the mountains, to shelter you from the consuming wrath of the Lamb. What *means* are you employing, that you may attain to the resurrection of the just? So far from counting all things but loss for CHRIST, you are *rejecting* the Saviour, and choosing to have your portion in this life. And can you then expect that the Saviour, who was a sufferer and a stranger for you on earth, will own and bless you, when He shall come again in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels? If you lay up your treasures here upon the earth, to the neglect of CHRIST, and of a heavenly inheritance, you are "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." What a bitter disappointment it will be for you, to hear from the lips of your Judge—"Remember that thou hast received thy good things."

Sermon 19.

CONFIRMATION.

HEBREWS VI. 2.—"*And of laying on of hands.*"

As some of you are soon to come forward, publicly to recognize the vows of your Baptism, and to be confirmed in the same, it is altogether proper that your attention should be directed to-day, to the nature of that Rite which is to be administered, and of the obligations which it imposes on all its recipients. For this purpose, I have chosen the words of the text.

In the previous part of this Epistle, St. Paul rebukes the Hebrews for the little progress they had made in the knowledge of the Gospel. "For when," he says, "ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." But notwithstanding their little proficiency in religious knowledge and attainments, he concludes to discuss for their instruction, the important doctrine which before he had seemed to think them almost incapable of understanding or appreciating. "Therefore,"

he says, "leaving the *principles* of the doctrine of CHRIST, let us go on unto perfection,—not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of Baptisms, AND OF LAYING ON OF HANDS, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."

From these words of St. Paul it plainly appears, that there existed in the church such a practice as the "laying on of hands," and that it must necessarily be one not of a transient nature,—not instituted for a particular or temporary emergency, and then to be abolished; but that it was intended to exist in all ages of the Church, and to be of perpetual obligation. This is evident from the fact that St. Paul ranks it among the *principles* of the doctrine of CHRIST: and we all know that the principles of any system cannot be destroyed, without an essential alteration in the system itself. And to suppose that any alteration, or essential modification, may be predicated of Christianity, is, impliedly at least, to challenge the infallibility and wisdom of Him, who is the author and the finisher of our Faith. Observe too, that the Apostle places it in the same category with Repentance and Faith and Baptism,—the Resurrection of the dead, and the eternal judgment. Until then we can discover some new method of justification in the sight of God, besides that of Repentance and Faith,—until it shall be shown that the Resurrection from the dead is but a fable, and that they who are fallen asleep in CHRIST are perished,—until the words of the same Apostle, assuring us that we shall all appear before the Judgment of CHRIST, shall be deprived of their momentous import, and men shall be no longer

accountable for their actions,—as long, in a word, as these elementary truths of our religion shall remain unshaken in their integrity, so long must "the laying on of hands" be maintained, as a perpetual institution of the Church of CHRIST.

But although the perpetuity of this ordinance seems evidently to be founded upon so impregnable a basis, the inquiry yet remains, what is the *nature* of the ordinance itself? What was the object intended to be accomplished by the laying on of hands? In answering these questions, we need something else to guide us, than the few words of the text.

From the Scriptures, then, we learn that the ceremony of laying on of hands was employed, 1. In Ordaining to the sacred functions of the Gospel Ministry. Thus we find St. Paul giving this admonition to Timothy,—"Stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." And again, when charging him, in reference to the admission of persons to the Pastoral Office in the Church, he says, "Lay hands suddenly on no man."

2. In the second place, we find that in healing the sick, this ceremony was almost universally employed.

3. And thirdly, in conferring a blessing, it seems to have been equally customary. Thus, when little children were brought to CHRIST, it was that He might lay His hands upon them, and bless them.

But it must be evident that the Apostle, in our text, could not have alluded to any of these customs. He is not addressing those who were appointed to minister in the Church, but a body of private Christians. The Rite, therefore, which he had in view, could not have been that of Ordination, for in that, so far as their own

personal experience was concerned, they could not have been so essentially interested. As before observed, the ceremony, mentioned by St. Paul, must have been as universal in its application, and as capable of being participated in, by every Christian, as the faith and repentance, with which it is classed. Neither could the Apostle have alluded to the healing of the sick, for that was but an incidental emergency, and bearing no analogy whatever to the doctrines of our faith; and moreover, it was only of a partial and temporary application. Nor could he have referred to the act of blessing: for we can perceive nothing therein that would entitle it to be ranked among the principles of the doctrine of CHRIST.

There is, however, one further purpose, for which we learn that the ceremony of the laying on of hands was administered. In the eighth chapter of "the Acts," and at the fourteenth verse, we find the following transaction narrated: "Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." So also in the nineteenth chapter of "the Acts," we read that after the twelve disciples, whom St. Paul found at Ephesus, had been baptized, "he laid his hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." That, we have no reason to doubt, was the ceremony which St. Paul had in view, when writing to the Hebrews. It was one not confined

in its application to any particular order of persons in the Church, but was administered freely to all who had been baptized; and consequently, the Hebrew converts must be supposed not only to have been instructed, in reference to the existence of the ordinance, but must also have been partakers of it themselves, and, of course, as much interested in the mention of it, as of the other points, with which the Apostle connected it.

Let us observe, moreover, the place assigned to it, among the several points enumerated in the context:—repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands. Here we may discern a regular, and systematic and consistent progression;—*Repentance*, as the very first act of the mind in the sinner's return to God;—*Faith* in the Lord Jesus CHRIST, as the only means of rendering this repentance available in the sight of God,—*Baptism*, the next step to be taken, by which the penitent and believing person is to be admitted to union and fellowship with CHRIST'S visible Church,—and then follows as an immediate consequence, *the laying on of hands*, or (as it is now termed, from the purpose which it is intended to serve,) the rite of CONFIRMATION. Now if we attentively consider the collocation of the Apostle, in connection with the fact, that in the instances of the administration of this Rite, mentioned in Scripture, it was always immediately subsequent to Baptism, there seems to be not the shadow of a doubt remaining, that St. Paul alluded, in our text, to this primitive ordinance.

There is another circumstance to be noticed in the account which is given us in "the Acts," viz: that the disciples could not avail themselves of the benefits of this ordinance, until the arrival of the Apostles. By

them alone, could it be administered. For although the disciples had been converted under the preaching of Philip and had been baptized by him, yet it was not until the Apostles at Jerusalem sent unto them Peter and John, their fellow-apostles, that the converts received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. And such is still, and such always has been, the practice of the Church. The authority to administer this Rite is so strictly appropriated to the highest officer in the Church, (the Bishop) that, under no circumstances, can a Priest or Deacon be delegated to perform it.

Such, my Brethren, are the grounds we have for regarding the rite of Confirmation as an Apostolic institution.

But the question may here arise,—Was not the administration of this rite, confined as it was to the Apostles, intended to be laid aside, together with the extraordinary powers possessed by the Apostles? Do we not find that, by the laying on of the Apostles' hands, miraculous gifts were conferred, such as prophesying, —healing,—speaking with tongues,—working miracles? and may we not suppose that when the wants of the Church no longer demanded these miraculous exhibitions of Divine power, the ordinance by which they were conveyed, was also dispensed with? Such a question as this, however, is suggested both by a misapprehension of facts, and by confounding the main design of the ordinance, that which was to be the *perpetual* effect of it, with that which was only incidental and temporary. By referring to St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, who had shown a disposition to pride themselves on the possession of these gifts, we find him ad-

dressing them, in questions such as these,—"Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues?" Here we have the fact plainly intimated, that although the laying on of hands was administered to all, yet it was by no means followed with the same effects upon all. And from the tenor of the Apostle's subsequent language, it seems clear that however highly the *Corinthians* might estimate the value of their "gifts," in his *own* estimation, they were but of *inferior* value. For he says, "Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet I show unto you a more excellent way;" and then proceeds in the following chapter, to descant most eloquently upon the pre-eminent excellencies of Charity, or a spirit of Christian love,—a grace which *every* Christian in all ages of the Church, must possess and diligently cultivate. Here it is, Brethren, in the urgency with which St. Paul recommends to the members of the Corinthian Church *this* most excellent gift, that we discover the *true* intent,—the main, the *permanent* benefits which were to be derived from partaking of the Rite now under consideration. The *miraculous* gifts were but incidentally connected with it; they were of a temporary nature, and designed to serve a specific and temporary purpose; but Christian love was to endure forever. For, as the Apostle himself hath written, "Charity never faileth." While, then, these extraordinary and miraculous gifts were more showy and attractive, and calculated to leave on a mere spectator, the impression that they were the most important benefits bestowed upon the early Christians, we are taught by St. Paul, to place them in a subordinate rank; and to

look for the *chief* design of the "laying on of hands," in the solid, enduring, but less obtrusive, graces of the Spirit.

And this is further confirmed by the fact, that it is an ordinance which has never been discontinued in the Church. In the periods subsequent to the time of the Apostles, after the age of miracles had passed away, it still remained in use, as one of the established and prominent institutions of the Church.

We see, then, that the argument derived from miraculous gifts, is of no weight whatever; but that so long as faith and hope and love shall abide as necessary to the Christian character and comfort, so long will the "laying on of hands" continue as an indestructible vehicle in the Church of God, for the conveyance and the confirmation of these, and other Christian graces.

Having thus briefly stated the authority, the origin, and the design of this ordinance, I would in conclusion, address a few words to those, who are more particularly interested in the subject.

God, in establishing a visible Church, and in instituting visible means of grace, by no means intended that we should attach to those outward visible means and ceremonies, any *intrinsic* efficacy in conferring the spiritual blessing. Although He has been pleased to constitute them the channel, through which, as an ordinary rule, He communicates the influences of His Spirit, yet we are not so to limit the Almighty, as to suppose that they are the only means which He possesses of visiting the soul with a sense of His favor, or that the benefits of religion are *necessarily* and *inseparably* connected with those means. There is no mysterious magic in any of

the Lord's institutions, by which they invariably impart benefits, without regard to the condition, or the motives, of those who approach to participate. Under the Old Testament dispensation, God ordained a regular system of sacrificial worship,—by a due conformity to which, the worshipper was made partaker of the Divine blessing. The Jews, in the time of St. Paul, had so far mistaken the true import of these sacrifices, as to suppose that they were, *of themselves*, effectual in securing a national and individual salvation. But St. Paul, in this Epistle to the Hebrews, corrects their error. He tells them that these sacrifices were but the *shadow* of good things to come,—of the one Great Sacrifice, which was to be offered for the sins of the world; and that without a spirit of faith in the worshipper, he would derive no spiritual profit from the services of the Temple. "For," says he, "it is not possible that the blood of *bulls* and of *goats* should take away sins," i. e. that they had no *inherent* virtue of their own, in procuring a transgressor's pardon.

From this we gather two important facts; that the means of grace derive their value, not so much from any fitness that *we* can discover in them, as from the fact that *God* has instituted them, and has *promised* to bless them; and, that these means, to be made effectual, must be used with proper feelings, if we would avail ourselves of the promise of God.

And while we avoid the error which has been referred to, let us be careful, on the other hand, not to reject, nor neglect, any of the appointed means, as unnecessary, because *we* can see no use in them.

Endeavor, then, my Brethren, by frequent and devout meditation,—by humble fervent prayer, to realize the

solemnity and the importance of that transaction, in which you are soon to engage. Often place yourselves in the presence of that great Being, with whom you are to ratify your Baptismal engagement. Remember who it is, that is about to receive and register your vows. Remember that He searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of men; that he desireth truth and sincerity in the inward parts, and that without such qualities, you have no warrant to expect His blessing. You are to *confirm* the promises, that you made, or that were made in your name, at the Baptismal Font. You are to declare your willingness to serve the Lord your God, and to devote your lives to a Redeemer, who gave His own for you. And does not this imply, that since you first entered into covenant with God, you have seen no reason to repent of that step? And such, we hope, is really the fact. Look back over all the way in which the Lord hath led you, since you first became a child of God; and is there anything for which you can impeach the faithfulness and tenderness of your heavenly Father? Has He not fed you with the spiritual manna, and have not the streams of His mercy followed you continually? Has *He* failed, in so much as one of all the good things which He covenanted to bestow? In many sweet seasons of private communion with God, when you had entered into your closet, and closed the door,—when no eye could see you, but His that seeth in secret, have you not been enabled to cry in the confidence of filial love,—"Truly, O Lord, Thou *art* our Father!" In the spirit of adoption, have you not been tenderly drawn towards Him, to commune with the Author of all your hopes and consolations? to plead His

own promises, and to receive fresh strength and courage for the remainder of your conflict? And in all this, did you not experience that He is indeed a faithful and ever gracious God? Come then, and draw still nearer to Him, in the bonds of your ratified vows. Come and tell Him, and tell the world, of His faithfulness and love. Come and receive fresh tokens of favor. We cannot draw too near to *Him*, my Brethren; He invites us to an intimacy; He freely offers us His blessings; and all that He asks of us, is that we should feel our need of them, and take them as freely as they are offered. Come then, and join yourself to the Lord in a covenant that shall never be broken. Be faithful unto death; endure, as seeing Him who is invisible, till you shall hereafter see Him face to face, and ratify your vows again in heaven!

Sermon 20.

THE PLEASURES OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE.

PROVERBS, III. 17.—"*Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*"

In Holy Scripture, the terms "Wisdom" and "Folly," are frequently employed as synonymous with "religion" and "irreligion;" and the propriety of this use of the terms is justified by the experience of the righteous, and the blessed termination of their course, and also by the corresponding experience of the wicked, in an unpeaceful, unsatisfying life, and in a dark and cheerless death.

No man was better qualified to pronounce testimony upon this subject than Solomon. He was master of all the pleasures which unlimited sovereignty could confer; in the vastness of his wealth, in the extent of his authority, and in his knowledge and wisdom, he had no equal. And yet, when viewing them as connected with the real, lasting happiness of man, he has inscribed upon them, with unhesitating emphasis, "Vanity of vanities,—all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Solomon was also fitted

to speak on this subject, by the discipline of a peculiar experience,—by painful remembrances of his own frailty and unfaithfulness. The beginning of his reign was great and glorious, in the sight of both God and man, such as became an illustrious type of the Prince of Righteousness and Peace; but by a sad apostasy, he fell, for a season, from that high eminence, and became the slave of his lusts, and a victim of the grossest idolatry. In his latter days of penitence and humiliation, after he had tasted not only the cup of this world's innocent pleasures, but had shared largely in her guilty joys, he was every way competent to impress on a gay and thoughtless world, the lessons of a large and bitter experience. We may imagine him at the end of life, looking back over his eventful course, and calculating with sadness, but without mistake, the "wages of sin," and the rewards of righteousness. And the result of his survey was, that whilst "to the sinner, God giveth travail," and vexation of soul, "to the man that is good in His sight, He giveth wisdom and knowledge and joy."

Such was the verdict of Solomon, when deliberately weighing the fruits of sin, against the fruits of holiness; —a verdict drawn from his own sorrowful experience of the one, and his humbling remembrances of the other.

But the words of the text were probably uttered *before* he had departed from the ways of the Lord, and may therefore be considered as the language of a pious heart, rejoicing in the peace of God, and the calm pleasures of a religious life. When taken in connection with the confessions of his declining years, they bear solemn and conclusive witness to the truth, that in religion only can be found true and enduring happiness.

Let us spend a brief space in attempting some *illustrations* of that truth.

The text directly contradicts an error, very prevalent among those who are strangers to religious joy, viz. that the yoke of CHRIST, instead of being easy and light, imposes a burden so difficult, as to oppress the spirits with an habitual melancholy and gloom. We would not, of course, assert that religion has not its sorrows, its trials, yea, even its heavy griefs. In becoming Christians, we are not thereby exempt from the common lot of humanity. Suffering, in its multiplied forms, lies all along the path of the Christian, and death and the grave are as surely his portion, as that of the most wayward and rebellious. The happiness of the Christian, therefore, consists not in being peculiarly free from trouble, but in being armed with such defences, and supplied with such comforts, as shall be needed in seasons of affliction. Nay, we may admit that there are trials in religion, of a nature, and a magnitude, unknown to the thoughtless and impenitent. —sorrows which can find no comforter, save in God's Holy Spirit, and difficulties not to be surmounted but by the omnipotence of our Divine Helper. But these comforts and this aid are secured to the believer by the sure mercies of an everlasting Covenant. His spiritual conquests and his spiritual joys, are more than enough to repay him for the toils of the conflict.

The foregoing statement suggests a thought which is worthy the serious consideration of those who refuse the service of CHRIST, from a fear that it will rob them of their pleasures. We have seen that trouble is the lot of *all*. If the Christian escapes it not, by assuming the yoke of CHRIST, much less can *you*, by continuing in

the service of sin. Is it not the part of wisdom, then, to cultivate feelings, and habits of living, that are in accordance with our true condition? If we are surrounded by dangers, is it not wise to live soberly, and to be on our guard against them? If we know not what a day may bring forth,—if the pleasures of to-day may be blasted by the heart-breaking sorrows of the morrow, is it not well to live in preparation for so sad a change? If sickness, after all our enjoyments, must lay us upon a bed of pain, and death must inevitably tear us from the loved objects of life, is it gloom and melancholy that prompt us to think much of these things? or is it not rather a dictate of the purest reason, the *duty* of a dying creature to lay them to heart, and to be forearmed for the conflict with "the Last Enemy?" O, if there be a dread Eternity before us, whose issues are everlasting life, or everlasting death, does it not well become the heir of immortality, to give diligence to make his calling and election sure? Now let us remember, that it does not rest with us, whether or not, we shall be surrounded by such solemn facts; calamities and death await us, whether we will or not. Let us then ask ourselves the question,—Whose is the highest pleasure? Is it his, who lives tremblingly amid these known and certain perils, and yet drives them from his thoughts, till they overtake him in their resistless might? or is it the man's, who daily stands prepared for the struggle, and when it comes, can enter the furnace of affliction without surprise or fear, sustained by the glorious hope of being more than conqueror? The *seriousness* of the believer, so far from being the offspring of unhappiness or discontent, is but the sobriety and watchfulness of a soldier in

the presence of his deadly foe,—the earnestness of the anxious mariner, amidst the billows of the raging sea. O, how should we pity the sons and daughters of folly, who can trifle, whilst surrounded by such dread solemnities! Of their mirth, it may be said with truth, that it is madness. Heaven is serious: Hell is serious. It is a serious thing to live: it is a serious thing to die. Happy,—thrice happy is he, who, amidst these stern realities, is steadfastly treading in that strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life!

But let us proceed to illustrate the truth of the text, by specifying some particulars, in which Religion imparts the highest and the truest happiness to man.

We would first premise, however, that there is no part of our nature, which does not share in this blessedness. Godliness is profitable for *this* life, as well as for that which is to come. It cuts us off from no proper enjoyment in its lawful measure. To both mind and body it is a ministering angel. Whilst it checks us in the ruinous indulgence of mere earthly pleasure, and lends a keener relish for every legitimate pursuit, it points us with the language of faith and hope, to a better world,—a world of purer joys,—unchanging and everlasting. It is with the things which are unseen and eternal, that Religion has mainly to do. The blessed light which it sheds upon the duties and enjoyments of *this* world, is but the reflected glory of the upper spheres. And in illustrating the pleasure and the peace of a religious life, we would direct your attention to such points, as are more intimately connected with eternity, and with the soul's everlasting welfare.

1. Religion furnishes the purest pleasure to the *intellect* of man.

Knowledge is not only *power*, but it is the main element of *happiness* in a rational being. It is not a mere ambition for worldly distinction, which leads so many to make painful sacrifices, and to wear out life itself in investigating the mysteries that are above us, and around us, and within us; but in such processes of thought, the mind finds its proper nutriment, and derives an independent pleasure. The visible heavens, and the earth which we inhabit, furnish a field, over which the human intellect has delighted to roam. We stand in awe, and in silent admiration of the results which that intellect has achieved, and is still achieving, for the information and the benefit of man. And we may well suppose that those master spirits, many of whom have lived and died unknown to fame, reaped a harvest of unspeakable enjoyment, as the wonders of the heavens and the earth successively unfolded themselves to their triumphant efforts. The discovery of a new world, floating afar off in the unmeasured fields of space, unseen by the busy multitude, unheard in its silent wanderings,—what a thrill of delight must it send to the mind of the lonely explorer! how mean and intrusive the applause of men! how degrading the very thought of fame, when surrounded by the hallowing influences of a new-born truth!

But Religion furnishes the materials of a knowledge, infinitely more blessed, glorious, and sublime. She carries us above and beyond all worlds, and reveals to the intellect of man that Being "who spake and they were created,—who commanded and they stood still." Amid all the varieties of human knowledge, and the extent of human attainments, the nature and the very existence of

God remained a matter of doubt, and ignorant speculation. None, by their searchings, could find out God: for "no man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he, to whom the Son will reveal Him." You perceive, that in speaking of Religion, and the knowledge of God, we mean the Religion of CHRIST, and that knowledge which proceeds from His all-informing Spirit. We mean the knowledge of God in His infinite holiness,—in His infinite love to sinners. We would pass over the glories of creation, and point you to "the glory of God in the face of Jesus CHRIST." We would leave all other mysteries behind, and fix your gaze upon the mystery of redeeming grace. I would not send you simply from "nature up to *nature's* God," but would commend to your love and admiration, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus CHRIST." There can be no pleasure in any other view of our Almighty Judge. It is only as He is seen, and His love is felt in the renewing and sanctifying power of His Spirit, that we can look up in the spirit of adoption, and contemplate with unceasing delight the unspeakable majesty of God.

We have spoken of the pleasure attending the first discovery of a truth: and so is it, when God first reveals Himself to the humble soul, as He does not to the world,—diffusing a holy joy, and a peace which passeth understanding. O, as the sanctified intellect rests upon God, and ponders the ever unfolding wonders of His grace and love, every other study will lose its interest, except as it is connected with this. The Book which contains the record of His will, will be searched because it is the Book of God, and supplies the only method by which we can be made acquainted with His otherwise

inscrutable purposes. We shall study and embrace its doctrines, because in them we learn the character of Him, "whom truly to know, is everlasting life." We shall study Him in His works, and all nature will be glorious, only as she declares the glory of the God we love. Come to the Saviour, and you will find food and rest for an intellect, restless and roaming, and ever at fault amidst the gross darkness of the world. This "knowledge will be pleasant unto thy soul." "Seek for it as for silver; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." "You will count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST Jesus your Lord."

2. Religion ministers a peculiar pleasure to the *moral* nature of man.

By this, we mean, what is commonly understood by "religious experience,"—the peace and joy of a soul once in conflict with all the purposes of God, but now brought into delightful harmony with the Divine will; the heart, once lavishing its affections upon the trifling and unsatisfying objects of the world, but now elevated, renewed, and finding in God an object of absorbing love; the conscience, once a constant accuser, silenced and appeased only by violence and outrage, but now, by the pardoning efficacy of the blood of CHRIST, dropping the sentence of condemnation, and becoming a faithful monitor, a salutary reprover, a friendly guide and instructor in the path of duty. All the faculties and affections of the soul have thus been reduced from turbulence and chaos, into harmony with each other, and into harmony with God. And how can a soul thus changed, fail to become the subject of a joy too deep

for utterance. What misery is comparable to that which springs from man's unhallowed and unruly passions! What desolation of the heart, like that which finds its warm affections disappointed and beaten back by the insensibility or ingratitude of the world! What torture so keen as the reproaches of a guilty conscience! Must it not then be a source of the purest delight, to be delivered from such a state? Can any outward circumstances, however happy in appearance, compensate for the loss of inward peace? What would it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and yet carry within his bosom, that which must often embitter his hours of leisure and reflection with distress and anguish,—which must make his seeming pleasures painful, and cause him to shrink with dreadful reluctance from the thought of death,—of falling into the hands of the living God? Welcome, all the sacrifices and trials that religion may demand, rather than such a life as that! Well may the believer count his heaviest tribulations, "*all joy*," when contrasted with the helpless, comfortless moments of the impenitent!

We have thus far spoken in a *general* way, of a soul that is at peace with itself, and with God. It may not be unprofitable to look a little more *particularly* at some of the sources of the Christian's joy.

Religion,—reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, brings the soul into a most delightful connection with God. There is between the Almighty, and His once lost, but recovered child, a confiding and affectionate intercourse. The veil which once hung between the soul and the inner sanctuary of God's presence and glory, has been rent assunder; and by that new and liv-

ing way, which has been consecrated by the blood of Jesus, he may approach with humble boldness, and make known his requests unto God. And this intercourse is mutual. God graciously draws nigh unto those who draw nigh unto Him. There is a conscious nearness,—a blessed communion, of the finite spirit, with the Infinite and Eternal One. From this connection of the regenerate soul with God, all those duties arise, in which the Christian engages. The impenitent, strangers to the love which prompts these duties, may regard them as burdensome; in his spiritual ignorance, he may scoff at them, as useless and unmeaning; but to the believer, they are "ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace." His best argument for them is, that God has not only commanded them, but that this command finds a ready response in his willing heart, which turns that command into a gracious privilege. Hence, all the ordinances of religion are pleasant. It is pleasant to hold private communion with God in the closet,—to come, as a man unto his friend, to tell all our mind unto Him who seeth in secret. It is pleasant to know that there is One in this wide Universe, to whom we can unbosom our most hidden griefs, and find a sympathy and relief, which no earthly friend can give. It is pleasant at the family altar, to offer up the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,—to come into the sanctuary of God, to enjoy His presence, and behold His glory. His Sabbaths are a delight: with David we can say, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God!"

Again,—the pleasure and the peace of a religious life, are not confined to the culture of individual piety; they spread themselves over the whole field of Chris-

tian *duty*. A true attachment to CHRIST will move the believer to expend his strength in promoting the Saviour's cause and glory. He must buffet the world's unbelief, indifference, or contempt. Like his Master, who left the peace of heaven for this rebellious world, he must go out from the retirement of the closet, to seek and to save that which is lost. And these duties will necessarily be accompanied with their trials in a thousand forms; but in as many forms, will he experience the fulfilment of the Saviour's promise, "In Me ye shall have peace." "Services are unpleasant, when they are either degrading in themselves,—when they are performed to a worthless master, or when they do not yield a sufficient recompense. But the services of the Christian are truly ennobling,—they are performed to Him whom angels delight to worship, and they are rewarded with the present riches of grace, and the eternal riches of glory." "In keeping" the Lord's "commandments, there is great reward;" "and His commandments are not grievous."

In all the trials which an active discharge of duty may involve, and in the afflictive dispensations of Providence, there are opened to the believer sources of comfort and relief, which make even the path of sorrow pleasant; so that, with Moses, he would rather *choose* affliction, with the people of God, than the pleasures of sin for a season. "God giveth him songs in the night."

Look for a moment at one or two of the Christian graces, which shine brightly in the dark hour of sorrow. *Faith*,—a simple and implicit trust in God, is life and strength to the believer's soul. To render this faith what it should be,—an active, living reality,—is the

great object of the Divine discipline. And it is from the valley of tears, when the arm of flesh is broken, that we look up to the God of all comfort and hope. It is in the hour of our *weakness*, that faith lays hold of Omnipotence with a more vigorous grasp, and the soul gains a new supply of God's strength and peace. When foiled in our conflict with the great Adversary, and sin lies heavy on the heart, O what a pleasure to turn to the Lamb of God, and by a firm reliance on the Saviour, renew again our covenant of peace.

Hope, too, shines brightest in affliction's night. She has her very birth in the lap of sorrow; and it is from amidst the ruins of all earthly joy, that she soars upon her strongest pinion, and takes her most distant flight. The path of hope, is truly the path of pleasantness and peace. Our sorrow is turned into joy, when, following *her* bright footsteps, we can look beyond every earthly trial, with a well grounded assurance of final and everlasting rest. Indeed, the paths of religion are *all* of them paths of pleasantnesss and peace. That which to the eye of the thoughtless and irreligous, seems a most unpromising feature in the road to heaven, is found, by experience to be so graciously prepared by the Lord of the way, that the pilgrims of Zion pass over it with songs of rejoicing and praise.

Come then, dear Hearer, and make trial of His love. O taste and see that the Lord is gracious. Be persuaded by the pains and disappointments of a life spent in leaning on worldly hopes, and by the fears which you *must* sometimes feel, that your present path is leading you to darkness and despair. We would plead with you, by the rules of all honest dealing with God and your own

soul, that as you have made *trial* of the ways of sin and folly, so you make trial too, of the ways of Wisdom, and of Holiness. *Without* such a trial you are not competent to compare the two; and will find yourself speechless, when standing before your righteous Judge. Shall the great Deceiver of souls have *all* your confidence? Will you seek for experience and knowledge in no other paths, than those, in which he would guide you? Let the time past of your life suffice to have wrought *his* will, and turn your feet unto the testimonies of God, and *prove*, for yourselves, what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of the Lord your Redeemer. The King of Israel tried them both; and his solemn testimony is, that "Wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." Such, we may confidently affirm, will be *your* testimony, if you will but *prove* the faithfulness, and the love of CHRIST. And when you have once entered upon those pleasant and peaceful paths, you will confess that the half was not told you.

Sermon 21.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

(ASCENSION DAY.)

ST. LUKE XXIV. 50, 51.—"*And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.*"

The Ascension of our Lord to the right hand of the Father, was, with one exception, the last event, visible to man, which shall transpire in the great work of Redemption. Henceforth, He shall never again be manifested to the world, till He shall come in the glory of His Father, and of the Holy Angels, to judge both the quick and dead. The transaction itself, is one of great interest and importance, as we may learn from the fact, that it is so circumstantially narrated by the Sacred Writers, and foretold by the Saviour Himself. The text gives additional interest to the subject, by representing Him, at the very moment of His Ascension, as performing one of His offices of love. He was taken from them while in the act of blessing them. "And it came

to pass, *while He blessed them*, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

I propose, in the first place, to draw your attention to this striking circumstance in the narrative, and then to mention some instructive lessons to be derived from the event itself.

That Jesus should be parted from His disciples, whilst words of blessing were on His lips, would seem to be recorded as no common event, but one of peculiar significance. "Having loved His own,"—we are elsewhere told, "He loved them unto the end." The Saviour never lost sight of the great object for which He descended from heaven. He came to bless, and to save. This was the great purpose of His mission, and by His words of love, and deeds of mercy, amidst the scorn and cruelty of the world, He sustained to the last, the character of the sinner's Saviour and friend. At His birth,—the Angel host celebrated His advent, with the triumphant proclamation of "Peace on earth,—good will to men." He opened His ministry by directing attention to that remarkable prophecy of Isaiah,—"The Spirit of the Lord hath sent me to heal the broken hearted,—to set at liberty them that are bruised." Amidst the anguish of the Cross, He prayed for blessings upon His murderers. His first address to His grief-stricken disciples, after rising from the dead, was a salutation of Peace. And now that He is about to leave them, to resume the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, His affectionate regards for them seem to be occupying His heart, more than thoughts of the coming glory. We know, indeed, that the omniscient mind of CHRIST was incapable of surprise or interrup-

tion, in any of the steps in His great work of love; and yet, regarded simply in its appearance, how much it seems as though the impatience of the Heavenly host tore Him away from an occupation, in which the soul of the Redeemer was all absorbed. The fact we are now contemplating, is full of interest for those who are seeking some ground, upon which to rest their confidence in the Saviour's continued love. There is no interval left for doubt. He ascends to Heaven upon a cloud of blessings. The whole space between the kneeling penitent, and the throne of our great Mediator, is thus filled, as it were, with blessings. What an evidence, that Jesus has carried the same loving heart with Him to the right hand of the Father, and that He still looks from the Throne of His glory, with an eye of tender compassion, upon all His faithful disciples.

The conviction of the Saviour's unchanging love acquires new interest and strength, from the circumstances of those upon whom He bestowed His parting blessing. The eleven were there,—all except the traitor Judas, who had gone to his own place. Every one of them had reason to meet the Saviour with guilty fears, and trembling doubts of His unaltered attachment. All had forsaken Him and fled, when He fell into the hands of foes, and was in the hour of His deepest anguish. They left Him to bear His grief alone, when He most needed the sympathy, and consolations, of chosen friends. Peter was there,—he, who with oaths and cursing, had denied his Master. Oh how much need had they, of the strongest renewed assurances of the Saviour's affection! And He did not fail to give those assurances. His last words, as He was parted from them, sealed

their forgiveness. Such a parting assured them, that all their past ingratitude,—the agonies of the Cross,—and the humiliation of the grave, had failed to quench that love which was stronger than death. The last remembrances of their injured Lord would be a balm to their stricken hearts, and must have cheered them in the arduous work of preaching CHRIST crucified to the world.

But let us proceed to some of the *lessons* to be derived from the event itself. We shall find these in the several *purposes* of the Saviour's Ascension.

1. The first that we shall notice is,—That He might receive the reward of His sufferings, in that personal glory and happiness, which awaited Him at the right hand of the Father.

In contemplating the work of Redemption, we are never to forget, that the sufferings of Jesus were *real* sufferings; that His condescension in becoming man,—His painful life, and His death of exquisite agony,—were not a mere pageant, intended to impose upon the senses of the spectator,—but that CHRIST was very man, as well as very God,—that He truly suffered, died, and was buried. The Captain of our salvation was once a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, far beyond any thing that His followers shall be called to experience. Not only were the pangs of hunger, and the thousand privations to which He submitted, as keenly felt as any one of us can feel them, but the neglect of friends, and the cruelty of those, for whom His tears and His blood were shed, must have inflicted a wound upon His heart, deep and painful, in proportion to the superior sensibilities of His exalted nature. To pass from all this, to the holiness and tranquillity of heaven,

must have formed no small portion of the Redeemer's happiness. It is true, His highest joy and satisfaction will be, that He sees of the travail of His soul, in the salvation of myriads of immortal beings,—in listening to their everlasting song of thanksgiving, and witnessing *their* joy. But there is doubtless a *personal* happiness, independently of this, which the man CHRIST Jesus possesses, in being delivered from all that made His earthly condition so painful and humiliating; a happiness as real and as exquisite, as were the anguish of the scourge, and the tortures of the Cross. All this we can understand, for our own natures are fully capable of such sufferings. But who can conceive the untold joy of our Lord, in having passed that mysterious agony, the bloody sweat of the garden,—and the hidings of His Father's face? in exchanging the blasphemies of man, and the temptations of devils, for the hosannas of angels and glorified spirits?

Are we not invited to such thoughts as these, by the Saviour Himself? To what else could He refer, in that gentle rebuke which He gave His disciples,—"If ye *loved* Me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father." The disciples were indulging a selfish desire for the Saviour's continual presence. He tells them that a true love for Him could lead them rather to rejoice, that He was so soon to be with His Father. It is indeed a thought which appeals to the heart of every professed friend of CHRIST. Yes,—if we truly love Him, we shall take pleasure in the reflection, that He Himself is happy. If we loved Him as we ought,—it would be an alleviation of our own sufferings here on earth,—not only to know that *we* shall hereafter reign

with Him,—but that He, who once suffered and died for our Salvation, is now exalted to the bliss of heaven. It should be, then, a subject of rejoicing with us,—that "Jesus' agony is o'er." "Death shall have no more dominion over Him." He has ascended, from the scene of unparalelled suffering and shame, to unequalled happiness and glory.

2. But again. Jesus has ascended into heaven, to take possession of it, in behalf of His people, as their Forerunner and Intercessor.

But little is said in Scripture on the point we have just been discussing,—the personal happiness of the Redeemer; only enough to give the lead to our thoughts, and intimate to us our duty. But much is said with reference to the benevolent purposes of His Ascension, towards those for whom He laid down His life. He has entered Heaven as the Forerunner of that countless multitude, who, at the second coming of their Lord, shall be redeemed from the power of the grave, and with bodies made like unto His own glorious body, shall ascend to Heaven, to be with Him forever. As His resurrection from the dead was a pledge and illustration of His people's resurrection, so is His Ascension into Heaven, in the same body in which He was crucified and buried, a pledge, that where their Lord is, there shall they be also. St. Paul refers to this, when describing the character and extent of the Christian's hope,—"as an anchor to the soul,—sure and steadfast, and entering within the vail, whither Jesus, our Forerunner, has entered for us." The fact that CHRIST, in His glorified human nature, is now actually in possession of Heaven, is here mentioned, as giving *certainty*

and *steadfastness* to the believer's hope, that his own glorified body shall be admitted to the same blessed privilege. And how much we need all the confirmation which Divine love and wisdom could give to such a hope as this! When we look at these dying bodies,—or, as St. Paul terms them, "these *vile* bodies," aside from the revealed purpose of God, we should be constrained to leave them to the corruption and forgetfulness of the grave. In contemplating our *present* condition,—we may well adopt the Psalmist's language of surprise,. "Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" But when, with the eye of faith, "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the Angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor," we may look, with the full assurance of believing hope, for our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in God's eternal glory.

That this may be our blessed privilege, Jesus has gone to heaven, to intercede for His people. He there *continues* His gracious work, as the Redeemer of men,—ever mindful, even upon His Throne, of those whom He has left to struggle with trial, temptation, and sin. He ever liveth to intercede for us.—"I go," said the Saviour to His sorrowing disciples, "I go to prepare a place *for you*." How it is that the Saviour carries on His Priestly Intercession in Heaven, we cannot know; the *fact* is all that is with any certainty revealed to us; and this is all-sufficient for our encouragement and comfort. "CHRIST—(the Apostle tells us)—being come, an High Priest of good things to come, hath entered into heaven, (the true Holy Place) not with the blood of

goats and calves,—but with His own blood,—there to appear in the presence of God for us." It is this continued work of love on the part of Christ in Heaven, which sustains the believer in his "great fight of afflictions." Subjected to a contest with the power of indwelling corruption,—how encouraging the assurance, that, "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father,—Jesus CHRIST the Righteous." Approaching in the name of our Great High Priest, with a living faith in His spotless Sacrifice for sin, we are shielded by His prevailing intercessions for us, at the Throne of the Divine glory. Compassed as we are with weaknesses, liable at every step to fall into mistakes,—our very best achievements sadly marred by imperfection,—how consoling to remember that we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." Unworthy as our best services are of God's acceptance, yet, if sincerely offered in dependence upon the intercession of Christ, our offering will never be despised. And our prayers,—Oh how feeble and ineffectual would they be, did not Jesus take them, and present them in His own name, perfumed with the incense of His own prevailing merits! Such is the office which our ascended Lord fulfils for us in Heaven,—an office which He will continue to fulfil, and which our necessities will require, till He shall deliver up the Kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all. Oh let us never forget His presence before the Throne, in any act of worship in which we engage,—a presence so merciful, and so needful for us. And let it excite our gratitude, that we have a Friend in heaven, ever

mindful of our interests, even though the thousand cares and duties of life, may often lead us to forget Him!

3. Jesus ascended to the mediatorial Throne, that as King of Saints, and the great Head of the Church, he might preside over her interests, and dispense His gifts and favors with a princely hand.

This royal power and prerogative of our ascended Lord, was prophetically celebrated by the Psalmist in the most animated language: "Thou hast ascended on high,—Thou hast led captivity captive,—Thou hast received gifts for men." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of glory." Such language is expressive of the highest conceivable dignity. We here see Jesus, once crowned with thorns, now crowned with Divine glory and honor; having "on His vesture, and on His thigh, a name written, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." It was in anticipation of such power and glory, that He said to His disciples, just before He ascended, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and Earth;—Go ye, and preach the gospel." Being thus exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, CHRIST, as Head over all things to His Church, dispenses to her all her powers and blessings. She is the Church of CHRIST; *His*, which He has purchased with His own blood,—whose interests all lie at His disposal, as her Founder and King. Hence it is in *His own name*, that He sends forth His first disci-

ples to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. "Go ye," —"As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Apostles and Prophets, — Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers, are all enumerated by St. Paul, among the gifts which CHRIST has bestowed upon His Church. They are the messengers and the servants of the Lord Jesus,—not self-constituted, but tracing up their authority to Him; in whose name they minister: not venturing to take this honor unto themselves, but *sent* by Him, who alone has the right to appoint the governors in His Church, and has promised to be with them, even unto the end of the world.

But the choicest of all the blessings that CHRIST bestows by virtue of His exaltation, is the Spirit of truth and holiness, that Spirit by whose influences and teachings alone, His ministers can effectually discharge their office, and by whose living power, the whole Body of His Church is animated and sanctified. "Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST." The Saviour Himself contemplated the mission of the Holy Spirit, as the most conspicuous among the benefits of His Ascension. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you." For this reason, He is called the Spirit of *Christ*,—the Spirit that *testifies* of CHRIST,—the Spirit who leads the sinner to CHRIST,—by whose sacred power, the believer is rooted, and built up, and made *complete* in CHRIST,—by whom, the whole Body of the Church is sanctified and cleansed, that it may be presented *to* CHRIST, "a glorious Church, —not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

This Supremacy of the Redeemer is complete and unqualified. He is our King, and our Law-giver, or He could not be our Saviour. He is our Lord and our God. Let us adore Him, as the Prince of Life,—the Fountain of all grace, who, having the Keys of Hell and of Death, controls the present and everlasting interests of each individual member of His Church on Earth, and before whose Throne of judgment every one of us must appear, to give an account of the deeds done in the body.

Finally, CHRIST has ascended to Heaven, that He might exhibit His conquests to other worlds, and receive the universal homage of all His subjects.

The work of Redemption, though confined in its achievement, tot his world, and having reference solely to the salvation of man, was sufficiently extensive in its character and results, to attract the attention of other worlds than this. The victories of CHRIST were over the "powers of darkness," the spiritual enemies of God. *All* holy beings felt an interest in the issue,—and so we are assured, that the recovery of one sinner to God was the occasion of joy among the Angels in Heaven. Can we doubt, then, that the final conquest of the Redeemer, and His Ascension to glory, were met by the Hallelujahs of every loyal subject of Jehovah? Heaven, we know, resounded with His praises, and we have reason to believe, that the news and the spectacle of His triumphs, were co-extensive with His boundless dominion. The Scripture, upon this point, is sufficiently explicit. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of Angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the Holy place. Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive." St. Paul tells us, that CHRIST "hav-

ing spoiled principalities and powers, made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them" by the Cross. The Saviour is here represented as leading captive a rebellious host, binding them to His Cross, as a conqueror chains his captives to his chariot wheels, making a display of His conquests before rejoicing worlds. Such universal homage is agreeable to the exalted dignity with which Holy Scripture invests the Redeemer. "Wherefore," saith the Apostle, "God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus CHRIST is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "By Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth; and He is *before* all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the Body, the Church,—that in all things, He might have the pre-eminence." O, how little, in our loftiest conceptions of what the Saviour suffered and accomplished upon the Cross, do we realize its just importance! The believer can understand it, in a measure, here; but who can tell its unknown relations to other worlds,—the new and astonishing exhibition which it has revealed to them, of the love and wisdom of Almighty God! Unnumbered millions of beings, who never fell, behold enough in the condescension of that great Sufferer upon Calvary, to awaken the strains of exulting joy. As He proceeds to take possession of His Mediatorial Crown and Throne, the song of triumph ascends from every portion of His vast creation. *And this,* because, *for man,* there is a way provided, through the

blood of Jesus, to escape from Hell, and secure the unutterable joys of Heaven. Oh, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? Behold, then, Brethren, your Saviour and your God! You have been with Him in His temptations, you have followed Him to the Cross, you have wept at His tomb, you have rejoiced at His mighty resurrection, and to-day, you have been called to contemplate His glorious ascension. Behold Him on the Throne of His unrivalled glory! Whilst Angels and Arch-angels, and all the company of Heaven, magnify His glorious name, let not your soul forget to praise Him. For you He suffered, for you He died, for you He ascended, and administers His power in Heaven. He has gone to His Father and to your Father, to His God and to your God. This is He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, He is alive forever more, and hath the keys of Hell and of Death. From the height of His exaltation, He proclaims to each one of His disciples,—"Be thou faithful unto death;" "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me in my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His Throne."

Sermon 22.

THE PRIVILEGE OF GOD'S CHILDREN.

1 John, iii. 2.—"*Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*"

"Godliness is profitable" for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come. The believer's happiness consists not altogether in the prospect of a future and complete redemption: a foretaste is given him of the joys that await him, when his earthly pilgrimage shall have closed. And though the things which God hath prepared in the world of glory, are seen as through a glass darkly, yet they may be discerned with sufficient clearness to form the theme of an exulting joy. Salvation begins on earth; and amidst the changes and the trials of our probation, not only are we sustained and strengthened by the assurance, that the conflict will end in a final triumph, but each day brings its victory,—each trial its comfort. And thus, while we may say,

with assured faith, like the Psalmist, "I shall behold Thy face in righteousness," we may also, with him, realize a *present* God,—a refuge in trouble,—a strength in weakness.

Such seems to be the nature of the Apostle's reflections in the text. His mind is as much occupied by an adoring sense of the believer's *present* privileges, as by the contemplation of his future destiny. In the preceding chapter, he treats at large of the evidences of a true sonship: and having done that, he breaks forth into expressions of grateful admiration. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that *we* should be called the sons of God. * * * Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

There is here presented to us, *First*, the believer's present privilege, as the child of God.

Secondly, his imperfect knowledge of the glory that is to be revealed in him.

Thirdly, the sufficiency of that which is with certainty revealed.

1. First, then, of the believer's present privilege, as an adopted child of God.

The *natural* condition of man is that of entire estrangement from God. The fatal effects of the Fall have spread universally over our race, so that all are born into this world with a heart averse to His character and will. And hence we read of a corresponding change, which must be effected in man, before God and himself can meet in harmony. "Verily, verily, I say

unto you, except a man be born *again*, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The same important truth was proclaimed by those who were commissioned to teach in the Saviour's name. "As many as received Him," writes the beloved disciple, "to them gave He power to become *the sons of God*, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Being born again," says St. Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

Such, then, is the character of the believer's sonship, or adoption into the family of God. It is effected by the Holy Spirit, working such a change in his views and affections, that God is regarded and loved, where once He was neglected and disliked. It is effected through faith in Jesus CHRIST, who is, in a peculiar sense, "the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father." By faith, we are spiritually united to the Saviour,—become one with Him, so that His Father becomes *our* Father,—His God, *our* God. And the privileges which flow from this spiritual relation are such as the unrenewed cannot receive, being still dead in their trespasses and sins. The *love* of God, as a Father, is, in a peculiar manner, extended to the Christian. Parental love is universally regarded as the strongest and purest affection that can dwell in the heart of fallen man. It is, therefore, frequently employed by the Sacred Writers, in describing the character and strength of God's love to His people; not, however, so much in the way of comparison, as of contrast. "When my father and my mother *forsake* me," says David, "then the *Lord* will take me up." "Can a woman forget her sucking-child, that she should

not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." By such declarations as these, the believer is led to form some faint conception of the pure and perfect love with which he is regarded by his heavenly Father. Free from all the imperfections of humanity, and exalted and regulated by all the excellencies of the Divine nature, it is bestowed upon the obedient child of God, from the fulness and the tenderness of a Father's heart. By virtue of a spiritual union to CHRIST, we become sharers in the affection which God cherishes and manifests towards Him, who, from eternity, lay in His bosom. And who, Brethren, can estimate the love which God the Father bears to CHRIST? But if we be found in Christ, we become the brethren of Him, who is the Son of God from everlasting,—the spirtual offspring of God, by a new and heavenly birth. And hence, the believer is said to receive not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father; the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

In the confidence of this new and sacred relation, we have boldness of access unto Him, before whom Angels worship. A feeble and sinful worm of the dust is thus exalted to a communion with the Lord Jehovah. As His children, we are no longer repelled by the contemplation of His mighty power; it is the power of our *Father*, and is directed by boundless love. We no longer shrink from the splendors of His spotless holiness, for being made new creatures in CHRIST Jesus, "we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image,

from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Every attribute of God, and all the manifestations of His character, become lines of attraction, and bonds of union. God is not in the thoughts of the wicked, or, if compelled to think of him, it is with fear and aversion, and trembling apprehensions for the future. But when every other thought is painful, God is the subject of the believer's joyful contemplation. In all the changing conditions of life, it is his privilege to draw near to the Lord, and to stay his soul upon the God of his salvation. In the restlessness of his midnight watchings, he will meditate, with David, upon God, and gain a serene composure, unknown to the wicked, amidst all their worldly comforts. In the retirement of the secret chamber, God is there, to hold communion with His children, to hear their prayer, and to manifest the *tokens* of His love. And O, "when days are dark, and friends are few," when the channels of human sympathy seem to be dried up, it is the privilege of the child of God, to lift his eye to heaven, and be assured of the changeless love of One, who will never leave him, nor forsake him.

Again;—the child of God may count upon an Almighty Protector. The desolations of the heart are not the only afflictions which make this world a vale of tears. Dangers surround us at every step, when we go out, and when we come in,—when we lie down, and when we rise up; we are utterly helpless in ourselves, and unprovided with any strength or resources of our own, to defend us against the thousand mischances of life. The strongest and the most confident,—they, who in the hour of their pride, say, "Who is the Lord that we should serve Him?" have found, at times, their strength

to be but weakness, and their courage, but the boasting of fools. Man is naturally self-dependent. The lofty spirit of youth, and the hardy vigor of manhood, lead him to mock at difficulties and dangers, and to lean upon his own right arm for security and success. But none have passed through life, without being made to feel that God alone is strong, and that in Jehovah alone is everlasting strength. When His wrath is kindled but a little, He turneth man to destruction, and we bring our years to an end, as it were a tale that is told. Who is sufficient to save him from the fiery bolt of heaven, when the Lord shall commission it to smite? Whose wisdom or care can preserve him from the arrow that flieth by day, or the pestilence that walketh in darkness, when they come as the messengers of the Almighty, to lay us upon a bed of trembling, and of pain, and perhaps to call us to the bar of judgment? How many, in the moment of conscious strength, have been brought, by some sudden calamity, to struggle with the king of terrors,—to be torn from life, whilst their grasp upon the world was yet strong, and but a moment before, their future seemed full of hope and gladness! The breaking of some slender string of life,—some one of the slightest accidents with which our life is crowded, may be sufficient to bring down the lofty looks, and crush the might of the strongest. And all these are the movements of the finger of God. They happen alike, it is true, to the evil and to the good. But there is this great difference,—that while the thoughtless neglecter of God meets them with a quaking spirit, the child of God can view them with calmness, as the operations of His hand, upon whom he leans for guidance and protection. God is his Father.

He, who wields the powers of nature,—who rides upon the whirlwind, and directs the storm,—without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, will provide for the safety of His spiritual children. Rejoicing in the *favor* of God, what is there that should agitate the believer in Jesus? Would that every child of God could adopt the confident language of David,—"Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say unto the Lord, Thou art my hope, and my strong hold, my God, in Thee will I trust. Thou shalt defend me under Thy wings, and I shall be safe under Thy feathers; Thy faithfulness and truth shall be my shield and buckler."

And as the child of God is not secured against the accidents of life, so is he not exempt from passing through the dark valley of the shadow of death. Perhaps the lingering pains of disease must shatter his earthly tenement, and he must feel all the anguish of a dying hour. But he will be reposing in the arms of everlasting love. God is with him. His rod and His staff, they shall comfort him. He who felt all the agonies of death for him, shall rob death of his sting, and the grave of his victory. In this last peril which the child of God shall encounter, O what a privilege, in the midst of suffering,—as the world is receding and disappearing, and the grave and eternity are advancing,—to be able to look up to the great God, and say, "Our Father, who art in Heaven!"

2. We were to notice, *secondly*, the believer's imperfect knowledge of the glory that shall be revealed in him. "It doth not yet appear what" he "shall be."

St. John does not mean that the children of God are

left in *entire* ignorance of their condition in a future world. For he himself, in other portions of his writings, hath given us bright visions of the world to come. His meaning obviously is, that God has not revealed, and that it is impossible for us to know, the *full* measure of that bliss, to which the Christian is an heir. The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, are such as pass man's understanding.

To look into the future is a natural propensity of the mind. Guilty fears combine with our immortal instincts, to push our inquiries beyond the grave, and penetrate the secrets of an untrodden eternity. And God has met these cravings of the soul, but with a wise and benevolent restriction. He has communicated enough to sustain and invigorate one's faith, and shed a settled peace over the soul, in the gloomy hour of death; and enough has been revealed to make the impenitent fear the darkness of the tomb, and the still darker terrors of a miserable eternity. We know, that when we close our eyes in death, our condition is *essentially* fixed forever. No change for the better will ever relieve the despair of the soul, which departs, unreconciled to God. And the spirit of the believer, when released from the conflicts of the flesh, shall pass to endless joys. For weal or for woe, we shall have passed into *eternity!* We know that the love of God which is shed abroad in the heart of the believer even here, will there be freed from all its hindrances and imperfections, and expand into a pure and seraphic affection. We know that the joys of sins forgiven, felt so imperfectly here, will there be transporting, unmixed with a sigh, or a tear. We know that faith will give place to sight, and that hope will be

swallowed up in possession and enjoyment. We know that all which we now see so dimly, will then be seen in the full blaze of that unclouded light which God and the Lamb shall pour upon the Redeemed. We know, in a word, that every grace which is communicated to the believer, is but the seed of a glorious harvest, to be ripened and gathered in heaven. And all this, we know, is to be eternal. *Forever and forever*, will be inscribed upon all the treasures of the sanctified soul.

But still, we know not what we shall be. If we reach that world of splendors, doubtless we shall be ready to exclaim, that the half was not told us. And how inadequate are the impressions which we receive from what *is* revealed! Who can tell what it is to love God with a *pure* and *perfect* love? Who can compass the full meaning of that transporting joy, which will animate a soul ransomed from the guilt and pollution of sin? And who can send his thoughts over the boundless fields of Eternity, and gather the full import of that solemn word? In attempting to fathom these "deep things of God," the soul is beaten back upon her own domains, and we are compelled to confess that such knowledge is too high for us,—that we cannot attain unto it. But it is not in vain that we indulge in such contemplations; for, though compelled to retire under a sense of our ignorance and weakness, we cannot but catch something of the spirit of heaven, by thus drawing nigh, in thought, to its blessed employments. And our failure to apprehend its glories entirely, is fitted to teach us the practical lesson to be derived from this portion of our subject. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things which are revealed

belong unto us, and to our children." Our immediate business is not so much with an unknown futurity, as with the truths and duties, which God has so clearly made known to us. Heaven has, indeed, been opened to the Christian's contemplation. The soul, struggling with sin, or affliction, finds one of the chief sources of her comfort, in embracing the promises,—in pondering her hopes beyond the grave. But our present and main concern should be, the fulfilment of our Christian obligations, in the daily walks of life. Such a fulfilment is indispensable to our integrity as Christians, to our inward peace, and to our advancement in the knowledge of God. We know not what we shall be hereafter, but we know what we should be here. The revelations of God on this point are plain, and full, and satisfactory. And from the obscurity which veils the secrets of the upper sanctuary, we may justly infer that God would have us give our attention principally to known and admitted truths, and to the active duties of the Christian life. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." And "what he knoweth not now, he shall know hereafter."

3. We were to notice, *Lastly,* the sufficiency of that which is revealed. We shall be *like* CHRIST; for we shall see Him as He is.

The doctrines and spirit of the Gospel have a direct tendency to produce in the believer, a forgetfulness of self, and an exaltation of the Redeemer. His highest *happiness* consists in the glory of CHRIST, his Saviour. The *love* of CHRIST is the mightiest, the purest, and most abiding motive, that stimulates and sustains him in his toils and sorrows. When his faith is tried to the utter-

most, and it seems difficult to reconcile God's dealings towards him with the possession of His favor, he remembers with more than resignation, that, as a child of God, he is predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son; and looking at the sufferings of CHRIST, he learns to glory in his own tribulations. And so, in looking forward to a complete emancipation from the bondage of sin, and in attempting to form noble conceptions of the joys yet to be, it is his "desire to depart, and *to be with Christ;*" "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." And in the consummation of all things, when the work of redemption shall be finished, and the Lord shall have counted up His jewels, the new song of heaven will be an ascription of praise unto Him, who hath redeemed sinners to God, by His blood, out of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue. It is to the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus, to assume the reins of universal government, and to be adored by all in heaven and earth, and thus to see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, that the believer looks, as the crowning of his hopes. The declaration of the Apostle is in consistency with this supreme attachment to the Redeemer. We know not what we shall be, but we know that we shall be like CHRIST. Here then, let our speculations rest. We have reached the fountain, from whence flow all our streams of joy. We shall indeed be happy, beyond all that imagination can now reach: sorrow, and pain, and tears will be unknown in that glorious world, toward which the believer is travelling: a joy, transcending all that ever entered the heart of man, will be his in heaven. But all this falls infinitely beneath the thought, that we

shall be completely transformed into the image of the spotless Saviour. He, who by His mighty power, shall change these vile bodies, and make them like unto His own glorious body, shall also clothe the *soul* of the believer with the beauties of His own holiness. Nothing but the word of inspiration could encourage us to aspire after such a destiny. To bear the image of the man CHRIST Jesus, will be, indeed, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Let us look, then, more steadfastly to Jesus. An habitual contemplation of our Lord will be the most effectual means of producing a growing likeness to Him. Our vision is now imperfect; but only the narrow stream of death divides us from His presence. And when we drop this dying flesh, and behold Him as He is, then the last stain of sin will disappear from the glorified spirit. The sight of CHRIST, to those who look and long for His appearing, will be transforming. In view of such a change as this, who would not say with the beloved disciple,—"Amen, even so: Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

Sermon 23.

THE PORTION OF THE SOUL.

(WHIT SUNDAY.)

LAM. III. 24.—"*The Lord is my Portion, saith my soul;—therefore will I hope in Him.*"

These words of the prophet are the expressions of a pious mind, under almost every species of bereavement, manifesting its joy, in the possession of a never failing portion in God. Jeremiah uttered his touching "Lamentations," when Jerusalem, his beloved city, was in ruins, and his people were suffering a most degrading captivity. The first impressions of this overwhelming calamity, appear to have been those of despondency and distrust. When he surveyed the long series of his varied griefs, he opens his mouth in seeming complaints against God, as though his trouble was greater than he could bear, exclaiming, "My strength and my hope are perished from the Lord, remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the

gall." But light seems suddenly to spring up amidst this deep darkness. He remembers that it is not for a living man to complain, a man for the punishment of his sins;—that it is of the Lord's mercies, and because of His never failing compassions, that we are not utterly consumed. Gratitude and hopeful confidence take the place of murmurings and discontent, and his soul mounts, at once, to the very fountain of the believer's joys, and in exulting strains he exclaims, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him."

There is a striking correspondence in the experience of eminent believers, in all ages;—each one, not only exhibiting the same general *outline* of religious character, but all resembling each other in that which constitutes the *essence* of religion; *all* uniting in the ultimate *ground* of believing hope and joy. To *hope* in God,—to look for *salvation* from Him,—to love Him as the Being who dispenses to us all our comforts,—these are points of experience, not only common to believers of every grade of piety, but they appeal for their reasonableness, even to the judgments of those who live without God and without hope in the world. But the sentiment of the text points us to a higher attainment of holy faith than any of these; an attainment which some of God's people do but faintly realize, and which the ungodly are apt to stamp with the opprobious epithet of fanaticism,—I mean the enjoyment of *God Himself*—independently of any of His inferior gifts. The soul of Jeremiah was oppressed with almost every species of grief. *Earthly* comfort was taken away from him. There was scarcely a worldly enjoyment left, as the basis of gratitude and love to God. And although at first, he seems to have

been overwhelmed by such accumulated bereavements, yet with the unextinguished energies of the Divine life within him, he suddenly turns away from the impoverished channels of spiritual strength, and mounts, as on eagles' wings, to the very throne and presence of Jehovah. In His righteous providence, God had cut him off from every other refuge. The religious, as well as the *civil*, privileges of the Jews were embraced in one common ruin. The Temple was desecrated by unhallowed feet. The heathen had come up into the inheritance of the Lord, so that the ordinary means of grace, and the accustomed access to the mercy-seat,—the peculiar privilege of the worshipper of the true God,—could no longer be enjoyed by the pious Jew. "The ways of Zion mourned, because none came to her solemn feasts, and all her gates were desolate."

Yet the Prophet was made to feel, even in this extremity of the Divine chastisements, that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor is He confined in His gracious visits to the soul, even to His own appointed ordinances. Though the heaven is His throne, and the earth His footstool, yet He condescends to dwell in every humble and contrite heart. The peculiar language of Jeremiah, in claiming *God Himself* as his Portion, was common, as we just now observed, to all the eminent servants of God. The Psalms of David abound with such expressions. "The Lord is the Portion of mine inheritance and of my cup,—yea, I have a goodly heritage." "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" And the Prophet Habakkuk most beautifully expresses the same thought,—"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines,—the labor-

of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat,—the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord,—I will joy in the God of my salvation."

We propose, in the remainder of this discourse, to unfold to you the foundation of such language on the part of God's people, and also, the nature and value of their Portion.

And 1. We are to consider the believer's warrant for using the language of the prophet. What foundation is there for it in the Word of God, and in the nature of the believer's relations to his Creator and Saviour?

If we attentively examine those passages of Scripture which mention the covenanted engagements of God with His people, and the benefits which flow from those engagements, we shall find some of them so peculiar, as to throw great light upon the subject of which we are treating. I will adduce a few of them, in illustration of my meaning. St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians with a view to restrain them from intermarrying with the heathen, appeals to the terms in which God Himself describes His covenant connexion with them. "For. ye are the temple of the Living God,—as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." And elsewhere, he reminds them, that their bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. By virtue of this indwelling of God the Spirit, the believer becomes partaker of the Divine nature; and being thus mystically united to the Lord, the Apostle assures the Christians at Rome, that even death, and the corruption of the grave, shall not separ-

ate them from Him. "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." Agreeably with this statement of the union of the believer to God by the indwelling of the Spirit, Christ is said to be *formed in us*, the hope of glory; and we are described as being *in* CHRIST; hence the language of St. John is full of meaning, when he says, "He that *hath* the Son hath life, and he that hath *not* the Son of God hath not life." "He that keepeth the commandments of God," he elsewhere declares, "dwelleth in God, and God in him." This spiritual intercommunion of the believer with the Divine nature, is further taught, in the most solemn and emphatic manner, by our Saviour Himself,—"Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life;—for My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." It matters not, for our purpose, whether we consider these words of CHRIST, as describing the result of a living faith *simply*, or whether we connect this faith with the worthy receiving of the emblems of His broken Body and shed Blood, at the Sacramental Table. In either case, we are taught that there is a mutual indwelling of the believer in CHRIST, and of CHRIST in him, as real, and as necessary to the creating and sustaining of spiritual life, as our daily bread is to the sustaining of our natural life. In harmony with these clear declarations of our Lord, is the prayer of Invocation, in that solemn Sacrament, in which we come to be fed with the spiritual food of His Body and Blood;—where we humbly

beseech Almighty God, that we may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of His Son Jesus Christ, and be made one body with Him, that He may dwell in us, and we in Him. And not to prolong these quotations, they may most appropriately be closed by referring you to those affecting words of CHRIST, in His intercessory prayer to the Father, before entering upon His last sufferings. "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name, those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as we are; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one *in us*. I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." It is not in vain, I trust, that these passages from the Word of God have been thus grouped together for your consideration, and that they throw their focal light upon the Prophet's words. They show us that a living, saving faith not only secures for the believer obedience to the laws of God, but that it joins him to Him, in a real union; making him one with Him, enabling him to dwell in Him, and, after his measure, to partake of God's inexhaustible fullness. And while rejoicing in hope of the glory yet to be revealed in us, we may even now, in the wonderful language of Inspiration, be made "partakers of the Divine nature." *God in us!* "of all His gifts, Himself the crown." Our own emptiness and nothingness are filled, as from the overflowings of an infinite Fountain. Dwelling in CHRIST, He dwells also in us, strengthening us by *His* strength, moulding our characters after His own image, by His blessed Spirit, till we are "filled with all the fullness of God." In the words of another, "The God whom the Christian wor-

ships, is not a God afar off, dwelling in the distant heavens, and watching providentially over the lives and fortunes of His people; but the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, is a God of love and consolation, filling the soul and the heart which He possesses, and making it impossible for them to seek any other end than *Himself*,—a God that causes the soul to feel, that *He* is its only good,—that He is its only *Rest*." How do such thoughts as these exalt the soul above every earthly good, and lead her to God Himself as her chief treasure, her only and all satisfying Portion. They demonstrate, most satisfactorily, that a *communion* with God, an enjoyment of *Himself*, is no reverie of a distempered imagination, but the highest and most sacred aspiration of a soul, which has become the habitation of the Spirit, and is guided by His unerring impulses. Though but few of us, it is be feared, realize this privilege as we ought, yet it *is* the privilege of *all*, to covet and to obtain this best of heaven's gifts. It was the last promise of the Saviour, just before He ascended from the scenes of His sufferings to the throne of His glory; "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter,—even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." When we realize in our hearts, the fulfilment of this gracious promise, we shall sympathize with David when he says, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God;" and, under the heaviest affliction, rejoicingly to say with the Prophet, "The Lord is my Portion, saith my soul."

II. We are to show, in the second place, the nature and value of the believer's Portion.

1st. It is a *spiritual* Portion,—a portion adapted to the wants of the immortal soul. This is intimated in the language of the text. The Lord is my Portion, saith *my soul*. God confers all real and necessary *temporal* good, upon those who trust in Him. Nothing that will conduce to their real welfare will be withheld by Him, upon whom they have cast their care. But the greatest apparent *earthly* good can never be a portion for the *soul*. Nothing of a *material* nature, or which must be left on this side the grave, can satisfy man's vast desires. But God is just such a Portion as is suited to his spiritual capacities and needs. The soul instinctively feels that the supreme good she seeks, exists not in the things which are about her. So lofty are her aims, that she stops not at the heavens, nor at the things above the heavens, nor at the angels,—nor at the most perfect of created beings; *they* have not what could satisfy her. She darts through universal creation, and cannot pause, until she has reached the very Throne of God. There the soul begins to find repose, and grasps that real good, than which nothing is so worthy of her love, and which cannot be taken from her without her own consent. God meets every wish, and fills up every void. The understanding is filled with light; the judgment is guided by eternal truth; the affections are supplied with an object, more than sufficient; and the conscience becomes pacified and calm, when purified by the presence, and conscious approbation, of Him whose favor is life, and whose loving kindness is better than life.

2. Again;—God is a *present* portion. He is a portion for the soul *now*, in this present time, before she has winged her flight to the endless enjoyment of her heritage above. It is not upon *hope*, merely, that the believer lives, and by which he is saved. The character of that hope, the fulness of which is reserved for him in heaven, receives all its complexion from the *earnest* of his inheritance, which he already possesses. Why does the Christian hope to see God hereafter, and enjoy him forever? Why does he rise above every other idea of future blessedness, and settle down upon *this*, as the consummation of his largest desires? It is because his soul has been made on *Earth*, the dwelling place of God the Spirit;—and he has learned, in his measure, to know *even here*, the *nature* of that blessedness which awaits him beyond the grave; and to *anticipate* with a joyful assurance, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all. As God fed the children of Israel with manna in the wilderness before they entered upon the full provisions of Canaan, so now, does He give His people a foretaste of their future complete enjoyment of Himself in Heaven. This is the believer's refuge under all his trials. When stripped of every earthly good, he is not left to the simple hope of a *future* recompense, but he can turn to God, his *present* portion, and say with David, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

3. *God* is a portion, of which the soul never grows weary. How soon do those who have their portion in the things of this life, throw them aside, as a child its toys! Their glory is but as a fading flower, and their

largest promises, even when fulfilled, are found to be insufficient for the soul's satisfaction. The greatest blessings God can give us, out of Himself, often lose their relish, by uninterrupted possession, and we cease to esteem them, even according to their real value. The most interesting pursuits in life will ultimately pall upon the taste. Variety forms the only relief of multitudes;—and how often do we meet with the melancholy spectacle of the aged worldling, having completed the circle of frivolous amusements, and when he should be thinking of the solemn concerns of Eternity, mingling again in the scenes of youthful folly, in the vain attempt to find in earthly things, that lasting pleasure which can be found only in religion. But not so with the soul where CHRIST has taken up His abode, and which has become adorned with the graces of His Spirit. Though all other things may lose their attractions, CHRIST can never become uninteresting to the believer. Our delight in any coveted earthly enjoyment is uniformly greatest at the first acquaintance; when we come nearer to it, and see more of it, and become familiar with it, disgust and satiety send us away in search of new trifles. But the longer you know CHRIST, and the nearer you come to him, still more will you see of His glory. Every fresh view of the Redeemer will fill the soul with a fresh delight. *Youth* will find in this portion of the soul, more than enough to occupy the most ardent impulses. The matured energies of manhood will still find in the contemplation of the Redeemer's glories, and in the rewards of His service, more than enough to meet his growing conceptions, and his riper emotions of gratitude and love. And when old age begins to throw a

shade over all things else, and earthly desire begins to fail, still will CHRIST abide the same glorious object of the soul's love and adoration." Oh! what an argument is here, for securing now, in the days of thy youth, this portion of the soul, before the evil days draw nigh, or the years, in the which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them! "Behold," says the Saviour, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man will open unto Me, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me."

The point which we have just been considering, is a fit introduction to the last view we shall take of the soul's portion;—it is an *Eternal* portion. We have seen that the measure in which God vouchsafes to imimpart Himself here to the believer is enough to satisfy all his wants; and that amidst all the vicissitudes of life, and the capricious changes in our aims and affections, the soul never wearies of this all sufficient good. To it will she cling with the ardor of a strong desire, as she leaves her clay tabernacle, and ascends to her native skies. And how cheering is the thought, that death, which divides her from all else below, is but the messenger of God, to call her to the full and everlasting enjoyment of that which she has loved most on earth. In heaven, God will be her everlasting portion. Our assurance of this is based upon the known and essential *attributes* of Jehovah. It is His prerogative *alone*, to claim a necessary, eternal existence. Every thing else, from the smallest atom, to the most exalted intelligence in Heaven, owes its origin to His creative power, and is dependent upon His sovereign will for every moment of continued being. Gabriel himself is not necessarily immortal, much less these heavens and this earth, the infe-

rior productions of Almighty Power. "They shall perish, but thou, Lord! shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed;—but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end." Here, then, in the necessary unchanging existence of God, is the sure foundation of the believer's everlasting hopes. The *Eternal* God is his Refuge. He who alone hath immortality, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, will be to the ransomed spirit, a portion unchanging and enduring as His own Eternity. O how secure, beyond all peradventure, are the interests of those who are embraced within the everlasting arms! Heaven and Earth may pass away,—the principalities and powers of the heavenly world may perish and be forgotten;—but through endless ages of unspeakable glory and joy, the believer in Jesus, saved by His blood, and sanctified and glorified by His grace, will know no fear of change or failure, in the protection and the love of the Lord Almighty.

Such is the believer's portion;—not of a favored few, but of *all*, if they would but awake to the contemplation of their blessed privilege,—if they would but rise above all created good, all imperfect and perishable things. It is for *every* child of God to say, "Thou Lord art *my* portion—therefore will I hope in *Thee*." I will hope, not for exemption from trouble, affliction, trial, or temptations,—but for strength for the discharge of every duty; that in my weakness, the power of my Lord may rest upon me. I will hope for comfort in every trial, that whatever sorrows may oppress my heart, thy comforts may refresh my soul. I will hope for deliver-

ance from every enemy,—for light to guide me through the dark valley of death,—for a blessed resurrection from the dead, and an abundant entrance into thy Kingdom of Eternal glory.

Sermon 25.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

[TRINITY SUNDAY.]

1 PETER II. 7.—"*Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious.*"

Nothing can be more remarkable than the difference in the impressions which divine truths make upon the minds of different individuals. This difference is, perhaps, more perceptible, in proportion as these truths are more directly connected with the person of our Redeemer. You seldom find one, whose feelings will not be solemnized, when you bring vividly before him, the certainty of death, of his own death,—and his entrance upon an eternal and untried scene of being; but tell him of the love of CHRIST, of His sufferings and death, and of His interceding compassion, and the subject will be listened to, in many instances, with an indifference, which betokens either an entire ignorance, or a total want of sensibility. There are others, however, whose principal enjoyment it is, to *dwell* upon the character of

their Redeemer. His Cross and Passion are subjects of deep and absorbing interest. By them CHRIST is esteemed as infinitely precious, the chief among ten thousand, and the One altogether lovely. The only reason to be assigned for this difference of feeling is, that the one class do not really *believe* in the important *truths implied* in the sufferings, and the mediation, of the Lord Jesus. That the story of redeeming love may be duly appreciated and felt, there are preliminary facts, involving views of our own condition and character, which must be understood and realized. Until those facts exert their legitimate influence upon the mind, the Gospel will awaken but comparatively little interest. The unsanctified heart may, indeed, be touched with emotions of sympathy, or stirred to a natural indignation, at the recital of cruelties inflicted upon the Saviour's person. But this result might be produced by the wrongs of any merely *human* sufferer. In the view of the *believer*, there is something in the Cross of CHRIST, calculated to awaken something far beyond a mere sympathy. There is something which *endears* the Saviour to him, and renders Him, in the language of the Apostle pre-eminently "*precious*." It will be the object of this discourse to enumerate, and enlarge upon some of those *facts*, already alluded to, which engage the faith of the believer, and thus to elucidate the truth of our text, that unto those only who *believe*, the Saviour is precious.

1. The first fact which I would mention as engaging the believer's faith, and tending to magnify the preciousness of CHRIST, is, that, as a sinner against God, his only hope of escape from the Divine condemnation, is in the *atonement* of this crucified Redeemer.

Until an individual has been led to humble himself before God, in penitence for sin, until he has been led to see, that if left to *himself*, his iniquities must be his ruin, and that CHRIST is the only hope of refuge from the displeasure of an offended God, in vain will you speak to him of the preciousness of a Saviour. The great purpose for which the Redeemer submitted to the ignominy of the Cross, was that He might save His people *from their sins*. And it is in this character of a Saviour from sin, that He must be regarded, before He can be properly valued. It is in this character, that He *is* embraced by every true believer, and becomes the central point, around which all his affections, his hopes, his joys will cluster evermore. The impenitent sinner, in his own estimation, needs no Saviour. The preaching of salvation, therefore, by the cross of CHRIST, if it ever attracts his attention, conveys but a mass of perplexing and unsatisfactory thought. With this fact in view, it can remain no longer a mystery, why the preaching of the Gospel should be attended with such different results in different individuals. Whilst the understanding continues darkened, and the heart insensible to its corruptions, how can it be expected that the sinner should apprehend the real character of Christ, or the nature of His salvation,—or depend upon the merits of His sufferings and death? The Spirit of God must first awaken him from the slumbers of spiritual death. He must first be brought to the anxious inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" before he can ever listen with a becoming interest, or with any real, perception of its worth, to the glad tidings of the Gospel. Every object is valued, just in proportion as we perceive its

adaptedness to accomplish a desired purpose,—its fitness to relieve our embarassments, and to meet our necessities. This fitness of things eminently belongs to the Gospel plan of salvation. It is a scheme of mercy, expressly adapted to the wants of a perishing world. *Guilt*, and *impending ruin* are pre-supposed by all the invitations and the promises of the Gospel. And the man who would presumptuously appropriate the blessings of redemption, may turn the grace of God into licentiousness, and make CHRIST the minister of sin, but can never feel that glow of gratitude and love,—that high-toned reasonable confidence in the Divine mercy, which animates the bosom of a pardoned soul. To such, however, as believe and feel that sin is exceeding sinful, —that, as sinners, they must have a personal interest in some method of pardon and sanctification, if they would escape the "wrath to come, the preaching of a crucified Saviour, is as balm to the wounded spirit, yielding a peculiar joy. This subject of redemption,—deliverance from the pollution, and the attendant misery, of sin, is, and should be, the favorite theme of the believer's meditation, for according as he has proper views of the danger from which he has been delivered, will be his attachment to Him, who has effected this deliverance; and this is what we understand the Apostle to mean, when he inculcates a *growth* in grace, and in the *knowledge* of our Lord and Saviour. Not simply such knowledge as may result from an intellectual examination of the grandeur, and the moral adaptedness, of this plan of mercy, but rather an inward and daily increasing, sense of our individual vileness in the sight of God,—and our *need* of just such a Redeemer as He has

provided for us. There is a height and depth, a length and breadth, to the love of God in CHRIST, which we can measure and appreciate, only by contrasting it with the height and the depth, the length and the breadth, of our iniquities.

2. The *second fact* necessary to be realized, in order to know the preciousness of CHRIST, and which *is* realized by every believer, is, that He is our *entire* Saviour. He is not merely an auxiliary in the work of our salvation, but is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. This doctrine is essentially necessary to the integrity of God's plan of mercy, and must be recognized by the sinner, before CHRIST can be received as He is offered to us in the Gospel. The soul is very loth to relinquish *all* claim to a righteousness of its own. Many may be found willing to receive the Saviour's merits as a compensation for their own deficiencies, whilst they depend, in part at least, upon their own obedience, as *some* ground of justification in the sight of God. It is true, the Christian is called to good works;—they are the natural result of the faith which justifies him; but to exalt them into a *ground* of justification, is a dishonor to the Redeemer, who claims and deserves *all* the glory of our salvation. This was an error which arose in the Church at an early date, and which the great Apostle of the Gentiles labored most assiduously to rebuke and to correct. The Church at Galatia, after having professed their faith in CHRIST, were soon induced, through the influence of some legal zealots, to think the simple plan of salvation through the merits of CHRIST, an incomplete one, and to attempt an amalgamation of the works of the Law, with the grace of the Gospel. St. Paul, in address-

ing them, earnestly contends for the purity of the faith, which he had once delivered to them. "O foolish Galatians! who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth? Are ye so foolish? Having *begun* in the *Spirit*, are ye made *perfect* by the *flesh?*" And afterwards, he tells them, that as many of them as had been baptized into CHRIST, had "*put on Christ*," that is, had clothed themselves with Him, as with a garment. Thus, by a very significant mode of expression, he intimated that CHRIST must be all in all to them; a *complete*, and an *all-sufficient* Saviour. A partial acquiescence in God's scheme of mercy, is very far from the views of one who has any just conception of the demerit of sin, and of the extent to which the soul has become debased through its influence. A proper sense of God's purity, and of the imperfection which attends even the best services of His sinful creatures, will never allow us to be satisfied with a salvation, which abandons us to a reliance, in any measure, upon a righteousness of our own. The merits of the *Saviour,—His* efficacious *atonement* for sin, will ever be pleaded as our all-prevailing, our only argument with a God, who cannot look upon iniquity. The more the believer tests his character by the standard of the Gospel, the more does he perceive and feel the *necessity* of standing before God complete IN CHRIST. When the sinner has thus been brought to see his utter helplessness—that the holiness of God demands a holiness in His creature, which *he* does not possess, and that the disease of sin has spread its infectious poison through his whole nature, so that from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in him,—with what alacrity and triumphant joy

will he flee for refuge to Him, who alone can shelter him, and present him spotless before the throne of God.

There is another method, however, by which CHRIST may be disregarded, as the only stronghold of the sinner. And that is, when the Christian, acknowledging his original indebtedness to the grace of his Redeemer, forgets his dependence upon that same Redeemer for guidance and sustenance through every subsequent step of his pilgrimage. It is not unfrequently the case, that the condescension of CHRIST, and our need of His Almighty strength, are remembered by the believer too exclusively in connection with the period of his conversion to God. He sometimes appears to imagine, that, at that period, there was instilled into his soul a *principle* of holiness, insuring his future advancement and safety, independently of his Master's continued help. A bitter experience, in such cases, is the only remedy for this lingering unbelief and self-sufficiency of the human heart. This experience will teach him that his feet must ever be fixed upon the Rock that is higher than himself,—that he must lean upon the Almighty arm of his Redeemer in *prosecuting* the conflict which is before him. Every lust that is subdued,—every spiritual victory that is won,—every attainment in holiness, and every renewed hope of glory, are to be ascribed to the *grace* of the *same* crucified Saviour, who was the *first* object of his faith and love. When CHRIST is thus regarded as One, who is at all times, and under all circumstances, indispensable to our safety, He becomes unspeakably precious. If the friend, who, by a timely interposition, and by great and gratuitous sacrifices, has rescued us from threatened destruction, is hailed

with our prompt and grateful acknowledgments, and if the mention of his name ever recalls the vivid recollection of his kindness, how will these emotions be increased, if the danger which threatened us be one that requires his *constant* interference,—if unceasing demands must be made upon the bounty, the love, the forbearance, of this same preserver! Yet such is the exigency of the redeemed sinner,—CHRIST is the sole medium through which he can venture to contemplate his Maker. His most hallowed devotions need to be purged from the stain of attendant sin and imperfection, by the atoning and interceding efficacy of his Great High Priest. Is it *strange*, then, brethren, that CHRIST should be so much the object of the believer's *precious* regard? Is it not strange rather, that He is not *more* esteemed and beloved? Is it not strange that He, who first sought us and plucked us as brands from the burning,—who still watches over us with untiring vigilance,—who is faithful in the midst of *our* faithlesssness,—who loads us with His blessings, and rebukes our forgetfulness and ingratitude, by the subduing influence of His love, should be so little valued, and should receive so small a share of the affections of His people?

3. But another consideration why the Saviour is precious to the believer, and one which completely fills up the measure of His worth, is, that "in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Our limits will not allow us to enter into any extended argument for the Divinity of the Saviour. We merely advert to the doctrine in connection with the language of the text, as one which does, and *must*, constitute one article of the believer's faith. It must be cordially received by him,

before the Saviour can occupy that place in his affections to which the Scriptures so unequivocally commend him. God, my Brethren, is *a jealous* God. He neither asks, nor will He accept, a *divided* heart. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind," is His own uncompromising demand; and he whose musings upon Jesus' love have kindled his feelings into a glow,—who has felt how completely the Saviour engages every thought, and exhausts every sensibility of the soul, can easily imagine the perplexity of the believer, when called upon to *distribute* his affections between two Beings, each of whom is so capable, and so *worthy*, of absorbing them all. If CHRIST be not God, the Christian must be careful, lest he love Him *too much*,—lest he bestow upon Him too large a share of that heart which *God* has solicited as a gift to *Himself*. But the Scriptures impose not a single restriction of this nature; *no limit* is *there* placed to the love, the gratitude, the *entire* devotion with which every soul, that knows any thing of the preciousness of CHRIST, is disposed to regard him. All the precepts, and commands, and warnings, of the Gospel upon the subject, are rather calculated to guard the believer against defrauding his Saviour of any portion of that love, to which He is so justly entitled. The precise point, then, to which we would call your attention, is this—that CHRIST is an object which so completely fills the spiritual vision of the believer,—the work which He has accomplished for him, is one of so vast a magnitude, as to awaken and engross ALL the most powerful affections of the soul. And if the Christian be *not* permitted to regard his Redeemer as his God, upon whom

alone he is justified in bestowing these affections, there must always be a most painful *embarrassment* in so restraining the emotions of his gratitude and love as to give to the Saviour but a *measurable* proportion. In other words, we must not love the Saviour as much as the remembrance of His benefits would incline us to do. Every one must see how harshly such a thought crosses every hallowed sentiment, and every fondly cherished feeling, of the Christian bosom. But we are not compelled thus to chain down the sanctified affections of the soul. On the contrary, it is our privilege to love the *Redeemer* "with *all* our strength." In estimating the *worth* of the Saviour, it is our privilege to embrace, so far as we can do it, "the fullness of Him who filleth *all in all*." The grateful aspirations of a soul redeemed by CHRIST from eternal woes, *demand* it. The suggestions of a heart, whose every pulse, quickened by a sense of the Redeemer's love, beats only for him, *demand* it; and it is only when the spirit *is* permitted thus to go forth in the unshackled freedom of her impulses, and to know no bounds to the energy and extent of these impulses, that we can even *approximate* to the measure of that love which the Redeemer claims. He is our *God incarnate*. In Him we see the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. To those only who *believe* and cherish a truth of such vast importance as this, *can* the Saviour really be "*precious*." The term which is here employed by the Apostle, is one which upon any other supposition than that of our Lord's *Divinity*, it were certainly dangerous to use. It is one which implies such a *devotedness* of the *whole* soul, that when connected with the sacred themes of

eternity, points us at once to Him, whose we are, and whom we serve. The doctrine, therefore, is one of unspeakable importance to the happiness of the Christian. What a satisfaction to know, that in studying the character of CHRIST, and in cultivating a communion with Him, we may launch forth into a shoreless ocean of adoration and love,—that around the object of our affections cluster all the glories of the Godhead,—and that in seeking to speak His praises, and to measure His worth, we may penetrate even to the throne of God Himself, and with Angels, and Archangels ascribe blessing, and honor, and glory and power, unto Him that *sitteth* upon the throne, and to the LAMB forever! What a satisfaction to reflect that our *God* is our Saviour. In the hour of temptation and adversity,—of spiritual darkness and despondency, with what confidence may we look unto Him, who is possessed of an Almighty strength, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge! In a word, how dear to the believer's heart must be a Saviour, who can address a sinful, dying immortal, in such terms as these,—"*Fear* not, I am Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come,—the Almighty; I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of hell and of death."

There are two observations of a practical nature, which seem to arise naturally from this subject.

In the first place,—our subject addresses itself to those, who have, as yet, discovered no attractions in the Redeemer,—and who can listen, unmoved, to the story of His sufferings and death.

"If our Gospel be hid, it is hid from those that are lost." How fearful a truth, for the impenitent to contemplate! how fearful the peradventure, that the darkness which now envelopes their spiritual vision, and conceals from them the glories of the Saviour, may be but the prelude of a more terrible darkness! It was your sins, my Hearer, that brought the Saviour from the Father's bosom, that nailed Him to the Cross, and extorted His cry of anguish. Has the fact never seemed strange, even to yourself, that you could so frequently hear of the sufferings,—the endurance,—the destitution,—the buffetings,—the crucifixion,—the dying agonies of CHRIST, and yet not feel a single pang in your own bosom, responsive to those of the Sufferer? Has it never occurred to you to enquire, why is this? Why is it that you can contemplate, unmoved, an event which clothed the heavens in sackcloth,—which rent the solid rocks, and startled even the dead from their slumbers? And whilst many, having by nature, hearts the same as yours, are moved to tears at the recital,—rejoice in CHRIST Jesus, and glory in nothing, so much as in the Cross of the Redeemer,—why is it, that to your view, He hath no beauty, that you should desire Him? The only reason is, that you have been blind to the real nature and cause of the Redeemer's sufferings. You have never been led to see that it was for *you* He suffered,—that it was *your sins* which called Him from the bosom of the Father. Study this subject then,—not as one of momentary interest, but as one, with which your eternal destinies are inseparably bound up. Seek the enlightening influences of His Spirit, that you may discover

your need of this Almighty Deliverer, and how inestimably precious are the glad tidings of a Saviour crucified.

But the believer, also, may find in this subject, much that should awaken him to a careful self-examination. There can be no safer test, perhaps, of the advancement we have made in religion, than the estimation in which we hold the Saviour. There is no revealed truth which should, or *can*, be disconnected from Him. And in proportion as the mind expands, and our faculties are capable of grasping more and more of the high destinies that await us, our gratitude and attachment to the Redeemer should experience a corresponding growth. For it is in *Him*, emphatically, that we live, and move, and have our being. The tenure of our existence, and the basis of all our hopes, are to be found in the fact that, as sinners, we are restored to the favor of God, and the hopes of an endless life, by the sacrifice of the Son of God. The light which first beamed upon our path, and pointed us to the Cross of CHRIST, for pardon and acceptance with God, must increase more and more, unto the perfect day. The price at which we valued the Saviour,—yea, the eagerness with which we clung to to Him, as our only security, was or should have been, in comparison with our after experience, but the day of small things with us. Every day is bringing us nearer to the moment, when the scenes of Eternity shall be disclosed, and we shall be brought into that Redeemer's presence. In looking forward to that period,—the blessedness of a personal communion with Him, of seeing Him as He is—and of knowing Him even as we are known, forms the brightest prospect of the happiness of Heaven. Is it not reasonable, then, that we should

cultivate a nearness of access to Him *here?* that we should prepare for an intimate communion with Him in Heaven, by striving to know more, and more, of the preciousness of communion with Him on earth? For this purpose, let us frequently make the fundamental points of our faith, which have already been mentioned, the subjects of our solemn meditation. Let us remember, that separated from CHRIST, we have no means of approach unto God in *this* world, and must forever be banished from His presence in another. Let us watch over the lingering corruptions of our nature, and as we feel our inability to contend against them, let us cleave the more closely to the Great Captain of our salvation.

By realizing, each day, our need of this Almighty Victor, we shall be better enabled to know His worth, and to esteem Him as "precious," now, and to hail Him as the source of all our joys hereafter.

Sermon 23.

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER.*

2 TIM. II. 3.—"*Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*"

Such was the exhortation of the aged Paul to the youthful Timothy. The veteran Apostle was himself soon to enter upon his rest, and to receive the crown of righteousness from the hands of that Master, whom he had served with unwavering fidelity. His zeal for the glory of that Master was not lessened by the weight of his years, or the confinement of his dungeon; nor is he so much absorbed in a contemplation of the reward to which he was hastening, as to lose sight of the Saviour's interests here upon earth. His second Epistle to Timothy was written but shortly before he suffered martyrdom for CHRIST; and his last efforts in behalf of the Redeemer's Church, were made, in fully equipping Timothy, his beloved son in the Lord, for the conflict which he himself had so well sustained. The sentiment

*The last sermon preached by Mr. Penny. See p. 17.

of the text derives additional interest from this circumstance. Timothy was exhorted to "endure hardness" in the service of CHRIST, by one who had had a large and varied *experience* in that service. It was not the enthusiastic utterance of a youthful mind, looking upon the future through the deceptive medium of a glowing fancy,—despising difficulties, of which, as yet, he knew nothing, and beguiling his followers by false statements, or exaggerated views, of the work to be performed. Nor was it the language of one, disposed to make an evil report of the cause, in which his life had been mainly spent. All its hardships he *knew*. He had *felt* them, in all their forms. Yet his spirit was unbroken; he loved the service still. It had been to him "a *good* fight." He would willingly have recommenced it, instead of departing to be with CHRIST. Such advice, therefore, came with admirable propriety from such a source, Paul *the aged*, rich in experience, rich in boundless love to the Saviour.

It is worthy of note, that throughout these Epistles, St. Paul confines Timothy's attention entirely to his duties and their difficulties. He does not throw out a single encouragement derived from promises of repose or enjoyment. Once, and once only, does he glance at such a topic; but it is, when, in the full assurance of faith, he looks away from this scene of conflict, and in the confidence of Christian hope, speaks of his own rest in Heaven.

The text is very fruitful in instruction to us *all*, my Hearers; for though addressed, originally, to an Apostle,—a Leader of the Christian host, it has its application to every one who has enlisted under the banner of

CHRIST. We are all the soldiers of Jesus, and have a warfare to accomplish. Let us then look, for a few moments, at some of the qualities of a good soldier.

And 1. A *good* soldier will never *enter* upon the service, with false views of its nature, and the difficulties which it involves. He will never commence a career, the main features of which, are industry, fatigue, exposure to perils and death, whilst his fancy is indulging romantic notions of a soft and easy life, or in premature thoughts of victory and glory. We have heard of such in the world's history,—of youthful adventurers, captivated by some dazzling enterprise, or impelled by the ardor of an uncalculating ambition, who have put on the soldier's armor, but whose dreams have all been dispelled by unexpected hardships, and their zeal quenched in the early struggles of the contest. These are the types of too many among the professed soldiers of the Cross. They do not sufficiently lay their account with *sufferings*, and *privations*, in the cause of CHRIST. The victory,—the glory and the crown,—the pleasures of a religious life, and the joys of salvation, are placed in the fore-front of their expectations, and are the earliest, and almost the only, objects of their regard. And hence it is, that so many either desert the service, or become comparatively inefficient,—the victims of discouragement and doubt, or what is worse, they fall back upon some plan of their own,—some standard of Christian duty, very far below that enjoined in the Bible, and involving but little sacrifice for CHRIST. These are they who are at ease in Zion, and upon whom the word of God has solemnly pronounced a woe. Such fearful results are far from being simply a misfortune. The *good*

soldier of Jesus CHRIST will find no difficulty in guarding against them by a wise forecast; for the Captain of our salvation has mercifully furnished us with ample warning and instruction. In no particular, is the Saviour's care and love more manifest, than in this. He would not deceive us, nor suffer us to deceive ourselves. In His invitations, He does not exhibit Himself in the garb of worldly pomp and power,—but stands before us in the attitude of a Sufferer,—a man of sorrows. He plainly tells us, that if we would be His disciples, we must deny ourselves, take up our Cross, and follow Him. He anticipates the mistaken eagerness of the thoughtless and impulsive; He arrests them upon the very threshold of their undertaking, by words which no impostor would utter,—checking them with cautions which might repel the self-deceived,—but which the docile and the sincere, would thankfully receive and use, as beacon-lights, to guard them against the dangers of their way. "Count the cost,"—calculate well your resources,—tribulations await you; such, in substance, are the terms which the Saviour distinctly announces, in the very outset of the struggle. The *good* soldier will heed them. He will enter upon the contest, expecting their fulfilment. He will not sink back in disappointment, as though some strange thing had happened unto him, but will stand ever on the watch, girding himself with strength for the combat. I may be addressing some one or more, who are contemplating the Saviour's service,—who have resolved to declare themselves on the Lord's side, and cast in their lot with His people. To such I would say in the language of Moses, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord

hath spoken good concerning Israel." The paths of religion are paths of pleasantness and peace. Come and unite yourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant of faithfulness and love, and you shall find rest to your souls. A crown of glory, and eternal life, shall be yours. These promises are all full of meaning and truth; they are yea and amen in CHRIST Jesus. But make not the fatal mistake of supposing that such a glorious harvest is to be reaped without previous toil. The truest pleasures of religion will be found in the very sacrifices which you make for CHRIST. The darkest hour will be illumined with the certainty of final triumph. As a good soldier of CHRIST, put on the whole armor of God, meet manfully every foe,—endure patiently every hardship. Expect them with certainty, and without fear; for thus only will you receive strength to be made more than conquerors.

2. A *good* soldier *abandons* himself, for the term of his enlistment, to the will of his Commander, and to the cause for which he fights.

This abandonment is entire. There is no tie too sacred to be sundered,—there is no object too dear to be relinquished,—there is no interest, of whatever kind, that is not made subordinate to the great purpose which he has in view. The annals of this world's unholy warfare, furnish innumerable illustrations of such self-devotion. The summons to the battle-field separates the husband from the wife of his bosom, and the father from the child of his affections. Every endearment of home,—every fond attachment,—all the comforts and enjoyments which make life desirable or happy, are practically forgotten and surrendered, for the absorbing oc-

cupations of the camp or the field. This is the very thought upon which the Apostolic injunction appears to be based. "No man," he says, "that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." Every one has doubtless read heart-rending descriptions of such scenes; and you must have noticed, that the men who made these sacrifices, were not *compelled* to do it by the brute force of tyranny, but that whilst the tenderest and purest emotions made them linger among those they loved, they, nevertheless, yielded to commanding convictions of duty,—to a sense of obligation, a higher and holier love than that which would detain them at the hearth-stone. At the call of their country, or in the defence of principles upon which depend the safety of society and all just government, private and individual interests have been made to yield to broader and more catholic claims. We feel that this is right. There is something in the process, which does violence to some of the finest sensibilities, and well nigh breaks the heart; but still we feel that it is right. And all honor is justly accorded to the men who have thus nobly renounced their choicest treasures for the public good. The Christian soldier is not unfrequently called to perform duties of a similar kind. So abandonment of every-thing for CHRIST, and for the interests of His Kingdom, is one of the prime requisites of a *good* soldier of the Cross. Stern as the requirement may seem, yet it is indeed a gracious necessity. Earthly affections often assume a form so sacred, that unless we had the sanction, and express command of CHRIST, the best of his followers would be in danger of suffering it to interfere with their allegiance to Him.

Earthly interest so often and so forcibly presents her claims,—to sacrifice it seems so sure to bring distress and beggary and ruin, that without the same command to awaken us to juster views, to quicken our confidence and love for the Captain of our Salvation, we should be in danger of exchanging our hopes of Heaven for the perishable things of this world. It is here that the Christian frequently finds his most perplexing and painful difficulties. Yet, where the mistaken affections of friends, or the silent pleadings of our own hearts, comes evidently in collision with the requirements of CHRIST and His gospel, the good soldier of Jesus, though it be with a bleeding heart, will bring his precious offering, and place it upon the Altar of Divine love. The demand is made by One who is far from insensible to the sufferings this may cost us. He well knows and marks each pulse of the struggling spirit. He knows that it is not easy,—that it is one of the heaviest trials of Christian fidelity, in many instances, impossible to human weakness, without the power of His all-conquering grace. The difficulty is distinctly recognised in the Apostle's exhortation, "*Endure*" this "*hardness*." It is the language of the deepest love,—not of unsympathising severity. It is *necessary*, that you may have freedom and strength to fight the battles of your Lord. The good soldier of CHRIST must be animated supremely by one controlling passion,—a desire that the *Saviour* may be glorified, though it be at the expense of all on earth, that he values. He remembers the solemn question of his Master,—"what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" He remembers, too, the gracious promise, that his patient endurance shall not be without its abund-

ant recompense, when the warfare is accomplished. For "every one," says CHRIST, "that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

3. A *good* soldier will fight his battles with scrupulous regard to the orders and directions of his Captain.

The strictness of military discipline is, in no point, more conspicuous than in this. A fancied superior intelligence on the part of the private soldier, or subordinate officer,—a greater knowledge of affairs,—and even such an unexpected state of things as would seem to demand a departure from instructions, would not shield the offender from the displeasure and punishment of his commander. This strictness is necessary; for, without it, the best framed enterprises would frequently issue in confusion and failure. An active mind might quarrel with the wisdom of the plan adopted for the war; an obtuse one might fail to penetrate its meaning, or trace its results;—implicit obedience might expose the good soldier to certain death, or a deviation from the line of conduct enjoined, might lead to some dazzling but transient advantage; yet neither these, nor any other reasons, would be deemed sufficient to justify a breach of orders. The analogy holds good for the soldier of the Cross. Many otherwise *good* soldiers, impair their real efficiency, and some are in no small danger of losing their share in the Redeemer's triumphs, by indulging a spirit of self-sufficiency,—by forgetting, that in every effort which they make for CHRIST, his instructions are to be followed, and not their own wisdom, nor even their own good impulses. Here again, the Apostle's own words will

save us from the charge of speaking carelessly, or from fancied resemblances,—"And if a man also strive for masteries," he says, "yet is he not *crowned*, except he strive *lawfully*." Now there are not only Divine laws which every soldier of CHRIST is bound to obey,—not only precepts, which have obviously to do with moral culture, and which the moral sense of every man will lead him to own as just and true,—but there are various enactments, for the use and propriety of which, we must make our appeal solely to the wisdom and authority of God. Our Lord has instituted His Church, with its Ministry and Means of grace and salvation. Its sacraments are of His own ordainment, for the nurture of the soul in the Divine life. His Word of truth is read and preached, and is, or should be, in the hands of every soldier; yet how many are relying upon weapons, and a strength, which have but little to do with these merciful supplies of our Heavenly Leader. "The express words of our Saviour CHRIST" were, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and yet multitudes, in the face of this, and other declarations of the Bible, think they can serve CHRIST as well, and get to Heaven with the same certainty, though they wilfully neglect the Sacrament of Baptism, and refuse to enrol themselves among the members of His Church. The only reason they assign is,—they see *no use in it*. They profess to believe in the Saviour,—and they trust in Him for salvation. But how poor an evidence do they give of their real regard for Him, and how feebly,—how *very* feebly, they fight for Him. Nor is this strange. For the strength, and the courage, of the soldier is immeasurably increased by

associating with his comrades,—by sharing their fatigues, and by fighting at their side. The spirit of the whole body is infused into his soul—a temporary defeat will be borne with less discouragement, and the joys of success will be felt tenfold, by joining with them in the shouts of victory. It is not strange then that those to whom we have been referring, should not be *good* soldiers of Jesus CHRIST.

Others again, though fully enlisted under the banner of CHRIST, find it difficult to obey orders. The march is either too slow, or the battle is not pressed with sufficient force, or the whole plan is somewhat defective. Individual impulses are taken for their guide, instead of patiently waiting upon CHRIST. A restless activity unfits them for working in harmony with the Divinely instituted means, and soon we find them the leaders of self-constituted hosts, calling their followers after their own names,—enduring for awhile,—but often, too often, substituting their own views, and plans, and designs, for the great object of the Redeemer's Church. It is not thus with the *good* soldier of JESUS CHRIST. He, also, will find no small difficulty in subjecting his will entirely to the will of his Master, and watching for the indications of that will, in every way in which it may be manifested. Impatient zeal will indeed find it hard, among the very *hardest* of the Divine requirements, to be still, and see the salvation of God. Yet obedience is better than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. There will be seasons, when God may seem to have forgotten to be gracious to His Vineyard. But, O, how much better, in faith and prayer, to supplicate the Lord of the harvest, that He would send down the showers of Divine grace;

that He would make bare His arm, and in His own good time, go before His people to victory and renown.

4. A *good* soldier considers himself bound to the service, till the great object for which he contends, is gained.

In all armies, there is a wide difference in the character of those who compose them. Some are mere hirelings, fighting for a pecuniary reward. Some have no interest in the important purposes for which the war is waged, nor any sympathy with the views and plans of their commander. War is their trade,—a mere business or profession. It would take but little to seduce them from the ranks, or from the service altogether; or, if they continue the contest, it is to discharge the cold routine of their duties. Such is the formal professor, and the half-hearted Christian, whose whole life is a round of irksome duty; but who seldom, if ever, feels the constraining love of the Saviour. There are others, however, who have enlisted with more intelligent and more elevated motives. They fully understand the objects of the war. They understand the anxieties and wishes of their Leader, and have a large sympathy with Him, and are ready not only to give Him all their time and strength, but to lay down their lives also, in behalf of the *Cause*, which He has at heart. They are held by no reward, but the pleasure of seeing the war happily concluded; and to accomplish this, their *whole life*, if necessary, is freely and heartily devoted to the service. Such is the character of a *good* soldier of Jesus Christ. He is not a cold or lukewarm professor, but one whose *heart* is with the Saviour,—who *loves* Him,—who loves His *cause*, who understands and sympathises with the

claims, which CHRIST has upon the love and obedience of all mankind. He will hold frequent intercourse with his Leader,—will commune with Him on the great concerns of the conflict, and his wearied spirit will receive comfort and refreshment from the counsels and encouragement of his Lord and Master. He sees that the great end of the Christian warfare is to reclaim a fallen world to its allegiance, and that this warfare will never close till "the judgment shall sit." Such an enterprise as this, demands the service of his *life*. His *enlistment*, therefore, is *for life*. He sees no resting spot on this side the grave, where he can lay aside his armor, or cease his watchful exertions. His whole march to the tomb is beleaguered by foes. And eternity —eternity alone, with its glorious rewards, presents to him the promise of repose and triumph. A vigorous faith will lead him to contemplate his everlasting rest, to send his thoughts beyond the grave, and nerve himself to renewed exertions, by anticipations of the song of victory. This, then, will be one great and striking characteristic of the "good soldier of Jesus CHRIST," that his mind will grasp the full extent and meaning of his conflict. All the changes, and trials, and disappointments of time, will never lead him to waver in his fidelity, and confidence, and love. Eternity, with its everlasting issues, explains to him all these. There, he sees every thing adjusted. Every affliction will be deemed light, whilst he looks, not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal. O what an energy would it give to every emotion, and every act for CHRIST, could we uniformly sustain this all-embracing view of the nature and

magnitude of our work! How short would this little moment of conflict seem, how unimportant and trifling its hardships, could we steadfastly keep in view the glory which shall be revealed! Look, then, beyond the grave, for your comforts and your encouragements;—"fight the good fight of *faith;*" "lay hold on Eternal life;" "though you be cast down, you shall not be destroyed." "Manfully fight, then, under the banner of CHRIST, against sin, the world, and the Devil, and continue His faithful soldier and servant unto your life's end."

Sermon 26.

LESSONS FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF DANIEL.*

DANIEL VI. 16.—"*Then the King commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the King spake, and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee.*"

The history of the prophet Daniel, furnishes some of the most interesting illustrations of devoted piety, as well as of the wisdom, the goodness, and the power of God. We know nothing of this servant of God, except as a captive in Babylon, suddenly exalted to the highest station in the court and kingdom of his conqueror, and thus employed as an illustrious instrument in working out the Divine purposes. It could not be expected that one of the hated Hebrew race, whose acts of daily piety were a constant protest against all idolatry, could enjoy such eminent favors without encountering the malice of envious aspirants. So the presidents and princes, failing to find occasion against Daniel, concerning the

*This Sermon and the one following are the last two, that were ever composed by their lamented author. He was not spared to utter them from the pulpit. See page 17.

kingdom, conspired to ruin him, on the ground of his religion. They accordingly procured a decree from the King, that whosoever should ask a petition of any God, or man, for thirty days, save of the King, should be cast into the den of lions. Such a decree, by the laws of the Medes and Persians, was unalterable. When Daniel knew that the decree was signed, he continued, with no attempt at concealment, to worship his God as usual. The conspirators then assembled, and accused him to the King, of disregarding the statute which had just been passed, and demanded the infliction of the penalty. The monarch labored, until the going down of the sun, to deliver his favorite,—but finally yielded to their demands. The result is recorded in our text. The prophet was cast into the den of lions, and the mouth of the den secured with the King's signet, and the signet of his lords.

The narrative furnishes some useful topics of reflection; a few of which will form the subject of the present discourse.

1. And first;—we learn the inveterate malignity of the human heart, while unchanged, against all that is truly good and holy.

The character of the Prophet Daniel stands pre-eminent for its faultless excellence. In the Scripture record of his life and acts, we read not of a single sin, springing either from wilfulness, or from the ordinary infirmities of our nature. It is not to be supposed that he was *really* without sin, either in the view of a Holy God, or in the judgment of his own conscience. The prayer and confession which he made, in behalf of himself and his people, show clearly, that he knew enough of his

own heart, to humble him in the presence of God's spotless purity; and that though, by the grace of God, he may have been preserved from outward and gross transgressions, he still needed the sanctifying power of the Spirit, to make him meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Yet in the eye of *man*, he presented a singularly noble specimen of godliness and fidelity. His duties to his King, and to the country, over whose interests he presided, were discharged with such integrity, that his bitterest enemies despaired of finding any ground of accusation against him, as unfaithful in his trust; and such was his zeal for the honor of God, that "three times a day, he went into his house, and his windows being opened in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God."

Every thing in religion, which can be rendered lovely and attractive by the mere force of example, must have been visible in the conduct of the prophet. Men generally, even those who make no secret of their opposition to the peculiar doctrines of the Cross, do homage to the blessed *fruits* of these doctrines, as they see them exhibited in the lives of humble and faithful disciples. Indeed, it is frequently the sinner's excuse for rejecting the claims of religion, that he does not see that Christians are any better than others,—that, in many respects, he thinks them less conscientious, less attentive than himself, to the ordinary obligations of honor and of duty. Those who make this excuse, would obviously have us infer, that could they only behold believers adorning their profession, by all the practical virtues of life, they would yield at once to the invita-

tions of the Gospel, and become followers of the Saviour. Their apology, however, is one of those many refuges of lies, in which the wicked take shelter. And even before the day of their final calamity, God often unmasks them to themselves, and shows them the hollowness and insincerity of their hearts. So long as the believer, in exemplifying the Christian virtues, interferes not with the sinner's pursuit of worldly pleasures or interests, or in the indulgence of unholy lusts, his character will frequently be admired, and extolled; but let there once be a collision, and all the native enmity of the heart is aroused; religion loses its aspect of loveliness, and the believer becomes the object of hatred and opposition. It was so in the case of the prophet Daniel. Who can doubt that there was many an ungodly courtier,—many a debased idolater, fully capable of being impressed by the noble traits in the character of this strange captive,—who could have admired and loved him, had he stood apart among his own people,—who if they had read of such a character, would have enrolled him among their gods, and have proclaimed his praises, in story and in song. But he stood in the way of their worldly interests; his wisdom and his holiness only served to expose their folly and impurity. And in mingling with his fellow courtiers, the faithfulness of the prophet, doubtless, led him to utter many a rebuke and warning in the ears of the selfish, the time serving, the flattering and the false, as well as the grossly impure and idolatrous. He was consequently the object of their deadly hatred. The venerable dignity with which he adorned his station, his invulnerable integrity, his unequalled accomplishments, and his attainments in

holiness, were no protection against their awakened hostility. And that very religion, which, under other circumstances, might have extorted sentiments of admiration, was made the express reason for his destruction.

Such is the heart of man, when thoroughly tested. We have not here any *singular* or *extravagant* exhibitions of human character. The enemies of Daniel were the enemies of *God*,—the enemies of *holiness* and of *truth*. Every age produces them, and in one form or another, we shall find men acting out essentially the same enmity and opposition, whenever the providence of God compels them to choose, which of the two they will *serve*, God or Mammon. Had the spotless Son of God been content to move among the men of His generation, without disturbing their consciences by His censure and rebukes, we might never have heard of the scenes of Calvary. The most licentious infidel that ever lived, is the author of a most glowing eulogy upon the character of Jesus CHRIST. The prophet Balaam, though his heart was filled with covetousness, and he himself perished, fighting among the enemies of God, could yet exclaim in view of the destinies of God's people, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel." "Let *me* die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" And may we not safely appeal to the experience of many among *you*, my Hearers, for the truthfulness of this picture? Religion may attract your regards, in many of the forms, in which you habitually encounter it. The Sabbath may be honored in your observance, and your seat in the Sanctuary may be punctually filled. You perhaps love to contemplate the walk and conversation of some

quiet and unobtrusive follower of CHRIST. You often think of the peaceful end of the righteous, and sigh for a death like his; and all this, you may be inclined to think, indicates a heart not at enmity with God. It may be so; but it may also be the cloak, with which the great Deceiver conceals from you the true state of the heart. All that has been mentioned, you may do, because it falls in with your convenience, and costs you nothing. But let that Christian whom you admire, or let the minister of CHRIST, come to you with his rebukes for sin,—let him tell you plainly that that heart of yours must be changed, let him point you to the idols which you must cast away, if you would be a true disciple of the Saviour,—let his intercourse with you be such, that you cannot live at ease, whilst making the world your portion,—and how soon would you begin to lose your regard for your Christian friend,—how soon would religion itself begin to look unlovely and repulsive, how soon would all the native opposition of the carnal mind be aroused, and, unless overcome by omnipotent grace, you would fall back among the avowed enemies of God. So deceitful is the heart. There is something too stern and fundamental in its dislike of the truth, to be thoroughly won to the service of God, by the simple display of that which is lovely and amiable in Christian conduct; else Daniel would never have been thrown to the lions,—nor would the Saviour have been crucified. What reason, then, is there for the prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart!" What reason to fear, lest when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, many a respecter of religion,—many an admirer of some of its truths, will be found among the enemies of God.

"Not every one," says CHRIST, "that saith unto Me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father, which is in heaven."

2. We learn that God sometimes suffers His most faithful servants to be exposed to the greatest dangers, and apparently abandoned to the power of their enemies.

It was in the *service of God,* and in consequence of his unflinching steadfastness in that service, that Daniel suffered such a sudden reverse in his earthly condition and prospects. The fact is particularly noticeable, not simply on the general principle, that the people of God are among the greatest sufferers in the present life, but on account of the extremity to which he was brought, and the seeming hopelessness of his case.

As an ordinary rule, the dark hours of trouble and affliction are illumined by so many remaining mercies, that whilst we mourn under the chastisements of God, we can still praise Him for the comforts which yet surround us. It is not often that we are brought to throw ourselves *simply* and *entirely* upon the power of God, to deliver us,—to see *every* refuge swept away, except the omnipotence of our Divine Protector. He who will not suffer us to be tried beyond what we are able to bear, reserves such emergencies as these, for the strong in faith, and that the weak believer may be instructed, and strengthened, for the hour of trial. The discipline to which Daniel was subjected, and his conduct under it, are therefore peculiarly worthy of our study. He had been zealous for the glory of Jehovah; he had maintained his integrity, in the midst of most singular diffi-

culties and temptations. In disobeying the King's decree, he must risk losing the favor of his royal Master, whom, no doubt, he honored and loved. His disobedience must expose him to the most cruel sufferings and death. And would his faithful, covenant God, abandon him to this, or permit his enemies to enjoy such a malicious triumph? Daniel had faith enough to believe that He would not; he therefore committed the keeping of his soul to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. But how painfully was the hour of deliverance protracted! Gradually, every subordinate means of escape from the threatened peril disappears. The foolish King struggled hard against the pertinacity of his lords, even to the going down of the sun, to evade the decree which his vanity had led him to sign. And probably Daniel hoped that the will of a capricious and absolute monarch would prevail over a silly notion, and the evident malice of his wicked counsellors. And when he saw this ground of his hope removed, he might still have trusted, that some providential interference would come between him and the dreadful death which threatened him. We can better imagine than describe, the feelings of the prophet, when he found himself completely in the power of his foes, and entering the mouth of the lion's den. This must have indeed been an hour of darkness, of wonderful, mysterious dealing on the part of God, whose honor he had so signally maintained, in the midst of surrounding blasphemies and idolatry. There was nothing now left for him to lean upon, but God himself,—to lose sight of all probabilities and conjecture, and to submit to the good pleasure, and the wisdom, of his Almighty Sovereign, and with a greater

than Daniel, to say, "O my Father! if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done!"

Such is the extremity of trial, for which God, in His wise providence, may be preparing any one of us. The experience of Daniel was written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. God is training His people, by all His dispensations, to put their whole trust and confidence *in Him*,—to lead them away from all earthly and visible dependence, and with the suffering and holy Job, to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!" Daniel, had he chosen, might have resorted to *other* methods of deliverance. He might have leaned to his own wisdom, instead of committing his cause entirely to his righteous Judge. Like some fearful believers, he might have thought that the very greatness of his danger justified him in making some compromise with his foes. He might have judged it but a light matter, to have closed his windows, and shut his doors about him, and in the secresy of his chamber, to have uttered his prayers to Him, who seeth and heareth in secret. Or, he might have deemed it an excusable omission, to have refrained, for a season, from his ordinary devotions, till the King should be brought to a more sober judgment. But he nobly rejected all such expedients as these. The honor of his Divine Lord and King had been publicly assailed, and he felt that in defending these, he might safely trust for his security to the power of the God whom he served. O, that we could all imbibe the courage and faith of this servant of the Lord! Beware of ever resorting to unlawful means of deliverance from any of your perplexities. However great they may be,—however plausible

the means of escape may seem, it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in them. The honor of your God is at stake. He may be greatly glorified by your waiting for his salvation. The very purpose of His reducing you to such extremities, is that your reliance may be upon Him. You may relieve yourself from a present trouble, by adopting questionable devices of your own; but you will lose a rich reward, in the consciousness of being saved by the right arm of the Lord, and in thus being brought nearer to Him, in the bonds of a holier confidence and love.

3. Though God may bring His servants, by severe measures, to put their sole trust in Him, he does not leave them altogether without comfort.

Infinite wisdom has not seen fit to indulge our curiosity, by revealing to us the workings of the prophet's mind, whilst undergoing this trial of his faith. But we may not unlawfully nor unprofitably conjecture them. Daniel, though a prophet, and endued with a large measure of grace, was a man of like passions with other men. And if he had not suffered from the common infirmities of our nature, the way in which the Lord was pleased to lead him, would have lost all its character as an act of discipline, or source of instruction. It was doubtless a cause of grief to him, that he should be compelled to cross the purposes of the King, whose chief minister he was. The command which the King finally gave, to cast him into the den of lions, might have seemed to him like the wayward and passionate determination of a disappointed and fickle Despot,—and to see one, whose favor he had so lately enjoyed, suddenly converted into his persecutor and destroyer, must have

greatly injured the sensibilities of his upright and noble nature. We will not suppose that he felt the smallest regret at the loss of his honors and dignities, or in being banished from the pleasures of a luxurious court. Unquestionably, he took no delight in these, and like Moses, would choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin. But it could not but have somewhat shaken his firmness, to be called to face death in so terrible a form,—to be torn violently from existence, and so abruptly summoned into the presence of his Judge. Eternity, too, is a solemn thought. To approach it gradually, with an opportunity for recollection, and the confirmation of our hope, is ordinarily enough for mortal strength; but to pass thus rapidly from the scenes and responsibilties of life, to the occupations of the eternal world, must demand a more than usual supply of Divine support and comfort. The prophet, we may well conjecture, felt all this, without wavering, in the least, in his resolution to suffer the whole will of God. Yet the rapid accumulation of painful and solemn occurrences was well calculated to produce some mental confusion, and oppress his heart with sadness. How full of comfort, then, must have been the words of his royal master,—"Thy God, whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee." How appropriate the *thought!* How fitting, that the *King himself* should be the one employed in the wisdom of God, to suggest it to the noble sufferer! It must have assured him at once, if he ever doubted it, that his violation of the blasphemous decree, had not lost him the favor of the King; nay, that it had served to secure to him a warm and sympathising friend. And if a

cloud had passed over his soul, and his communion with God had been at all disturbed, how must his heart have risen above all his troubles, and found its repose, and its steadfastness, restored, in remembrance of the power, and the faithfulness of Jehovah! It was apparently a most timely succor. And how strange a comforter! *An ignorant pagan*, a *self-worshipper*, ministering Divine consolation to a man of God! How gloriously does this illustrate the ability of God to furnish aid to His people from the most unexpected sources! How should it encourage us to trust His mercy and His love, under all discouragements! In His own good time, He will speak comfortably to all, whom He calls to suffer. He will not permit them to be tried beyond their strength. Rather than leave them without necessary relief, He will raise up comforters from the very stones on which we tread. How great and precious is His promise,—"Fear not, O Israel, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name,—Thou art Mine;—I will even make a way, and give waters in the wilderness, and springs in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen!"

4. *Finally:* We may profitably notice in this transaction, one or two important purposes accomplished by it.

The first and most obvious must have been the strengthening of every grace, for which Daniel had hitherto been so remarkable. The whole course of the prophet's history presents him to us in a most striking attitude, as a firm, dignified, and uncompromising champion in the cause of his religion, and his God. The eye of a mere human critic can discover no blemish in

his character; yet the severer scrutiny of Him, who "seeth not as man seeth," could discern the need of a purifying process, to fit His servant for more exalted services in His Church. The sufferings of good men,—of the eminently devoted followers of CHRIST, should cease to be a mystery to us, when we remember that God chargeth even His angels with folly,—that suffering is the chosen method of mercy, by which He would make us the partakers of His holiness, and that the very best of men have used the strongest and the most self-abasing language, in view of their own sins and imperfections. St. Paul regarded himself as the chief of sinners. Daniel prostrated himself before God, in confession of sin, with shame and confusion of face; and Job, when he saw more clearly the Divine holiness and glory, *abhorred* himself, and repented in dust and ashes. Let the thought, my fellow Christians, save us from thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; let it lead us to contemplate more studiously the perfections and the glory of God, and if He call us to pass through the furnace of affliction, to do so in reliance upon the Divine presence and strength,—trusting that when he hath tried us, we may come forth as gold.

But what we would more particularly notice, in the case of Daniel, is the necessity of *personal experience*, in order to receive the full impression of sacred truth. His exposure in the den of lions, is the first instance that we read of, in which his faith and confidence in God were put to such a test. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were cast bound into the burning fiery furnace, Daniel, though one of their companions in the government of the kingdom, and in fidelity to God, was not

called to *share* that trial. He was permitted merely to witness it, and to receive what instruction might be obtained from observing their steadfastness, and triumph. He undoubtedly received great spiritual profit from the sufferings of his brethren in captivity, and glorified God in their behalf. But this was not sufficient. God saw it necessary that he himself, *in his own person*, should also suffer, in order to know the difficulty, and the benefit, of submission to the Divine will. Without this, his faith and patience could not have had their perfect work. And thus is it with every child of God. What you see, Brethren, in the afflictions of others, may give you much profit and instruction. It may fit you for many important services in the cause of CHRIST; but you must know it all *in your own experience*, before you can have a full and adequate knowledge of the force, and meaning, of the Divine precepts, and be imbued with that strength which is made perfect in our weakness.

And how great was the glory which the *God* of Daniel derived from the issue of this trial! This indeed is the point upon which every lover of God will fix, as one of crowning interest and importance. It was evidently the design of the Almighty, that whilst His servant should be greatly profited, He Himself should be glorified in the eyes of His own people, and before their heathen oppressors. It is mentioned as the CLIMAX—*the great result* and the PURPOSE, of the whole transaction, so that when King Darius found that Daniel was delivered by the care and the power of God, from the fury of the lions, he wrote a Decree unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth,—"That in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble

and fear before the GOD OF DANIEL; for He is the living God, and steadfast forever, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders, in Heaven and Earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions." O how little do you know, Brethren, the gracious and exalted purpose of Infinite Wisdom, when He causes you to go down into the vale of sorrow! What honor He is putting upon a sinful feeble worm of the dust, in making you an instrument in bringing glory to His great Name. You may not see this in the hour of suffering,—but could you look beyond the brief moment of your light affliction, and behold every tear that you shed, a gem in the crown of your Redeemer,—how gladly would you suffer for CHRIST'S sake! How would you welcome every grief,—"that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise and honor and glory, at the appearing of Jesus CHRIST!"

Finished on Saturday, July 30, 1853.

Sermon 27.

THE STILL SMALL VOICE.

1 KINGS XIX. 11, 12, 13.—"*And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind, an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake, a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.*"

This manifestation of the Lord to His prophet Elijah, was made upon mount Horeb, whither Elijah had fled from the threatenings of Jezebel, the wicked queen of Ahab. But a short time previous to the events recorded in the text, we read of that wonderful exhibition of God's power, the miraculous descent of fire from heaven to consume the burnt-sacrifice of the Prophet, and Elijah's amazing zeal and courage in the destruction of the prophets of Baal. It would seem that Elijah had expected too much from that display of the Lord's power and glory. He had hastily concluded that his people would utterly renounce their idolatry, after witnessing

the ease with which Jehovah could vindicate His claims. He supposed that such a memorable spectacle would lead to a reformation in Israel, and to the restoration of Divine worship in its purity.—His disappointment, therefore, was great, when instead of any such result, he encountered the awakened wrath of the abandoned Jezebel, who threatened him with speedy death, in revenge for the destruction of Baal's prophets. The courage he had so recently displayed, gave way to fear, and he fled for his life, till he came to Horeb, the mount of God; where it pleased the Lord again to manifest Himself to him, in the unexpected and instructive manner narrated in the text. There came first the strong wind, rending the mountains and the rocks; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind, an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake, a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. The wind, the earthquake, and the fire, must have produced their natural effects upon the mind of the prophet, inspiring him with holy fear and dread;—but the full impression of the Divine presence was not felt, till these imposing scenes had passed, and there fell upon the ear of the trembling and expectant Elijah, the gentle whisperings of that still small voice. The effect of it was immediate and remarkable. The awed and humble Prophet acknowledged the presence of God's eternal majesty, by wrapping his face in his mantle, and devoutly standing to hear what the Lord his God would say unto him.

Religion consists essentially and fundamentally in right apprehensions of the Divine Being. Without

these, we cannot *feel* aright toward Him, nor can we effectually *serve* Him. But God Himself must necessarily be our instructor in this matter. We are in darkness and ignorance and sin. We know nothing of Him, except so far as it has pleased Him to make Himself known to us. We know not how He may best be *glorified*, except as we are guided by the instructions of His revealed Word, and the imparted influences of His Spirit. The Prophet Elijah was made to feel this; to humble himself before God in the discoveries He made of the Divine character at mount Horeb,—and to return to the discharge of his duties, a wiser, a meeker, and a holier man.

Let me invite your attention to the contemplation of his experience, and to the lessons which it teaches. For what can be of greater importance, than justly to know Him, in whom we live and move and have our being? to know how we may have safe access and communion with Him, before whom we must stand in the judgment? and to learn here in His service upon earth, the methods of Divine wisdom and grace with fallen man, that we may be qualified for the holier and more important services of that world, where God is revealed in unveiled glory.

1. The text then teaches us, in the *first* place, that the *truest* idea of God is not to be obtained so much from the exhibitions of His power, as from the various ways in which He has caused mercy to triumph over judgment.

This *general* truth may be illustrated by the method of salvation,—the way in which it pleased a justly offended God, specially to reveal Himself to His fallen

creature, and to win him from the paths of sin. This merciful purpose of the Almighty was not, and could not be accomplished by all the terrors of Mount Sinai, by the awful exhibitions there made of His irresistible might, and His unapproachable holiness, but by the milder glories of Mount Zion,—by the proclamations of His love and mercy in the person of the Lord Jesus CHRIST. The giving of the Law, with its terrible array of thunderings and of lightnings, was a wonderful manifestation of God's wisdom, as a part of the great scheme for recovering man from his apostasy. It taught His people to know against what a Being they had dared to rebel,—how easily He could have doomed the whole race to perdition,—how perfect and spotless was His character, and how exceeding broad that law, whose solemn obligations and sanctions, must ever rest upon the heart and conscience of every rational creature. It was peculiarly appropriate, and well calculated to bring the sinner in the dust before God,—to clothe him with humility, and prepare him under a trembling sense of his worthlessness and guilt and danger, to listen to the soft whispers of peace,—to welcome with gratitude and love, the language of reconciliation,—the blessings of salvation through the atonement of the Cross, as these are applied to the soul by "the still small voice" of the Spirit. When we say, then, that salvation could not be effected by the Law,—we do not mean to speak of that Law as a powerless thing. When we say that the true glory of God is not seen in it,—we do not mean that it has no glory at all. When we point you to the Cross, to the words of love which fell from the lips of a dying Saviour,—we would not have

you forget the lessons of Sinai; that this is the same God who spake in thunder from the burning Mount, and who will yet again, in the dreadful day of Judgment, pronounce upon the incorrigibly wicked, the sentence of everlasting punishment. God cannot change. Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary, are links in the same chain of Divine mercy and love. The Law is our School Master to bring us to CHRIST. Its instructions and discipline are a necessary preparation for a just and safe reception of the Gospel, or that Gospel will be but a system of licentiousness, and the source of a deeper condemnation.

With these precautionary thoughts, we would turn your attention, then, directly to the glory of the Gospel. "For if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, which glory was to be done away, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? And if the ministration of *condemnation* be glory, much more doth the ministration of *righteousness exceed in glory*." It is the triumph of the Gospel, that whilst it makes no concealment of God's holiness, and establishes the requirements of His Law, it tells the trembling transgressor, that there is *mercy* with God for even the "*chief* of sinners." It is the glory of the Cross, that in the sufferings of Jesus, and in the proclamations of pardoning love, "Mercy and *truth* have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." God is the same just and holy God;—for the wilful and finally impenitent, He has the same sentence of eternal condemnation. But the voice of the Son of God pleads with the sinner in the language of tender persuasion, to flee from the wrath to come. He points

him to His own precious blood, as a Fountain in which the guilty soul may be cleansed from all stain of sin. What the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,—CHRIST *has done for us*, by His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and Passion, and precious Death. God now approaches us, in the person of His dear Son, with the great and precious invitations and promises of His Gospel.—"Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." The great and glorious Jehovah descends from Heaven to earth, that he may speak more familiarly with man, and utter these words of mercy. The Spirit pleads,—oh how tenderly,—with what watchfulness, and forbearance,—with what long suffering and patience! In the days of youth, when the heart is more susceptible to the motives of love, He hovers over the ripening emotions of the soul;—He whispers of Heaven, and discourses of the unspeakable love of Jesus. Though grieved and resisted,—when the sinner is wearied with worldly pleasure,—or broken with disappointment, He returns, and speaks again of CHRIST, and of a better world. And how gently does He minister to the hearts of the children of God. If we yield to His holy guidance,—what comfort is there in the hour of sorrow, in the gracious consolations which He imparts. How effectually does He bind up the broken heart, and pour balm upon the bruised spirit! And does not this ministration of righteousness, then, exceed in glory? How worthy of God,—that He should not only proclaim to us His holiness in the threatenings of His Law,—but

that in the provisions of His Gospel, and by "the still small voice" of His Spirit, He should make us the partakers of that holiness. God is Love; O that we might be constrained to love Him! God is just;—He will by no means clear the guilty. "He that despised Moses' Law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses;—of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace."

2. God is not found, in the truest sense, in the heavy judgments which He sometimes sends upon nations and communities.

It is true of these, as of the threatenings of the Divine Law, that they serve a great and important purpose in God's providential government. "When Thy judgments are in the earth," says the Prophet, "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

The natural effects of such visitations, is to awake the sleeping consciences of God's people, and to alarm the wicked. But such effects are generally imperfect and transitory. Who has not witnessed this, in the history of any public calamity? When an unexpected accident occurs, by which hundreds of our fellow-beings are suddenly swept from time into eternity,—the blow falls with a stunning power upon the minds of men. The hand of God is indeed recognised; we feel how frail and impotent we are against the countless methods, by which the spark of life may be, in a moment, quenched. We are checked for a time in our earthly pursuits, and even worldly men will speak to each other of things, which, at other times, they would be ashamed to own, as having any control

over their thoughts or lives. But the event is soon forgotten. It reaches no deeper than the *conscience*, or the *fears* of men. And these are soon pacified by accustomed pleasures or pursuits. "God was not in the *wind*, the *earthquake, or the fire*." There was no peculiar or sufficient efficacy, *in these alone*, to lead the soul to CHRIST. Men soon become familiar with them, and their very repetition produces an indifference, which requires something of a new and much more startling nature to disturb. The same may be noticed, when the pestilence is abroad, and the mourners go about the streets, and the dead are carried by scores to their narrow home. When the first intelligence is given, that the dreadful scourge is on the wing, and will soon be among us, to desolate our homes,—every heart trembles, and becomes faint with fear. The hand performs but imperfectly its usual office in the work of life; for it is almost paralyzed with the thought, that it may soon be motionless in the grave. And when the work of death begins, and neighbor and friend are struck down at our side,—how tame,—how trifling,—how obtrusive do the concerns of the world appear! How many times over, would the ungodly exchange their earthly substance for one gleam of hope beyond the grave! See them crowding the temples of God;—men who never prayed before,—earnestly seeking deliverance from Him, who dispenses life and death at His sovereign pleasure. But soon there is a change. Men become familiar with sights of distress;—even corruption and the grave lose something of their terrors. The living move away the dead, almost as if in perfect security, and sometimes hardened by the scenes of horror which surround them.

God is indeed here, in a very important sense. His providential presence is much felt and acknowledged. But where are those who are brought to own Him as their covenant God and Saviour? To give their hearts to Him in holy love, and to consecrate their lives to His service? Do we ever hear of numerous conversions to God, wrought by such means as these? When the storm has passed by, how many return to thank God, that they are yet in the land of the living, and of hope? Unless the wind, the earthquake and the fire are followed by "the still small voice" of the Spirit, it will be in vain that men have trembled and feared before the God of Heaven. It is not amidst such scenes as these, that such a voice is mostly heard, or uttered. It is when the soul can look more calmly and thoughtfully at her own condition, that this heavenly Visitant comes with His blessed entreaties and successful appeals. It is when you can sit down and think of past dangers mercifully escaped,—when you can contemplate the blessings with which the Lord is crowning your existence, when you can listen to the gracious invitations of CHRIST, and give heed to His word of warning, O, it is then, that His holy influences are distilled as the dew, and as the showers upon the tender herb. Wait not, my hearers, to be *alarmed*, or *startled* into religion, by some extraordinary providence. It may be His message, to summon you all unprepared, and with no opportunity for repentance, to stand before His judgment seat. Now is the accepted time. Obey the monitions of His Spirit, when He comes to you in the hour of solitude,—when His still small voice is heard in the silence of the night watches,—when He speaks to you in your prosperity,—when He

calls you amidst comforts and blessings innumerable, to give your *affections*, and not your fears, to that Saviour, who has so loved you, as to lay down His life for your redemption.

3. The scene in our text reminds us, that God is not found amidst the noisy occupations of the world.

The world, with its active duties, is the sphere of man's probation, and has a just demand upon his thoughts and energies. It is of the first importance, however, when entering upon those duties, to discriminate between the impulses of a busy spirit, or the love of worldly pursuits, and a conscientious desire to do the will of our Father in Heaven. In performing any known *duty* of life, we are no doubt pleasing God as fully as when we are sitting at the feet of Jesus. We may find Him, and commune with Him, while *engaged* in these duties, with equal, or even greater satisfaction, than when we are bending before His mercy-seat. The spirit of CHRIST is an *active* spirit. It is ever devising schemes of mercy, and unwearied in their execution. But in all this activity, there will be nothing to disturb the harmony of the soul in its intercourse with God. The very first symptoms of decay in spiritual strength will instinctively be felt, and the fields of active exertion, whether in the performance of deeds of charity and mercy, or in the ordinary avocations of life, will be abandoned for the closet, to seek fresh supplies from Him, "of Whose only gift it cometh, that His faithful people do unto Him true and laudable service." But this godly fidelity may be, and often is, made the plea for an almost utter neglect of the claims of religion. The man of business surrounds himself with the complicated ma-

chinery of vast mercantile projects. Every moment of every day is filled up with anxious thoughts concerning some plan for worldly aggrandizement. The alternations of fear and hope,—of disappointment and success, are all confined to the perishable things of earth. With many, not a moment can be spared for the interests of the soul and eternity. Even the sacred day of rest,—that merciful provision of a bountiful God,—is absorbed in the whirl of secular pursuits. There are not wanting those, who will dignify all this with the name of duty; who first encompass themselves with embarrassments and hindrances in their way to heaven, and then plead them as excuses to their conscience, and their God. It can be no matter of surprise, that such should be left to their own devices. It cannot be expected that God will work a miracle for their salvation. The "still small voice" of His Spirit will not be heard amidst the din, and strife, and anxiety for the things of this life. Conscience may often be disturbed and alarmed; but the winning and gentle tones of the Spirit, by which the soul is effectually led to the Cross of CHRIST, will reach the sinner, only in connection with the means of salvation, or in the due discharge of the world's claims upon his attention. The case which we have mentioned is, an extreme one; but its spirit animates a large class of those who would be unwilling to close against themselves the door of mercy. Many a professed disciple of CHRIST, whose thoughts and affections should be set upon things above, is so entangled amidst worldly cares, that the soul can with difficulty rise to the contemplation of her heavenly hopes. The six days of earthly toil are so sedulously given to the interests of time,

that the kingdom of God and His righteousness obtain but a secondary place in their thoughts. The child of God is often insensibly led to engage so extensively in the pursuits of the world, that before he is aware of it, a worldly spirit governs him; religion degenerates into a duty, instead of being a privilege, and a pleasure;—His ungodly associations will follow him to the secret chamber, and even into the sanctuary, and his soul becomes almost barren of all spiritual enjoyment. In such cases, he has gone beyond the sphere, into which the "still small voice" of the Spirit penetrates. He has forgotten the gracious admonitions of the Saviour, that but one thing is needful. Like Martha, he is careful and troubled about many things. Like Mary, he should cast those burdens upon the Lord, and must come into closer communication with Him, before he can again receive the blessed communications of His Spirit. These earthly aims and anxieties grieve Him; they are quite uncongenial with His holy influence, and unless restrained within just bounds, may leave the negligent disciple a stranger to His comforts.

And if this be true of *excessive* application to what is, in itself, lawful, how much more so must it be of an habitual devotion to "the vain pomp and glory of the world." Nothing is so well calculated to deprave the moral sense, as a continued indulgence in the mere amusements of life. The pleasure-seeker, it is true, has sometimes sickened of the pursuit. God has sought him, even amidst the gayeties of life, and reclaimed him from his sin and folly. But such cases are always noticed as remarkable interpositions of Divine power and grace. They only serve to prove that with God noth-

ing is impossible. The *rule* is far otherwise. A constant mingling in scenes of pleasure *must* unfit the soul for pure and holy impressions. The Spirit of God is not the companion of the noisy revel, or the more refined amusements of the ball room. In moments of retirement from such scenes, when the mind is wearied with the empty round of dissipation, the "still small voice" of the Spirit may find access to the guilty trifler, and seek to win his soul to God. But many has been the melancholy instance, in which His voice has been silenced by continued visits to the seat of sinful pleasures, and the gay victim never again favored with the whispers of His love. *Innocent* as those amusements may appear to some, they have been the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire, to the spiritual hopes of thousands.

4. *Lastly.* God is not likely to be found, when the soul is surrounded by the terrors of death, and the fears of an approaching judgment.

We have already seen that the Divine method of subduing the heart of the rebellious sinner, is a method of gentleness and love. The moment which He chooses for approaching the soul, is when that soul is least likely to be disturbed by overpowering apprehensions, or when most withdrawn from the distractions of life, and therefore most accessible to the persuasions of His Spirit. A death-bed repentance is *possible;* as possible as that the gay reveller may be visited by the overpowering influences of God's spirit, in the midst of his intoxicating pleasures. But both are to be explained upon the same principle. They are out of the ordinary course of Divine mercy, and are to be ascribed to the abounding

grace of Him, who worketh all things according to His will. Who would be so reckless, as to abandon himself to a course of licentiousness, with the hope that God would snatch him from the midst of his vile indulgences, and make him a signal monument of His mercy! Yet he is no less presumptuous, who defers repentance to the weakness and fears of a dying hour. Religion, when truly embraced, is the choice of the soul over all earthly good. It is her heritage forever,—the consolation and the balm of life,—the surest and the only preparation for death. It is the giving of the heart to God, whilst the faculties are strong, and the affections warm, and while the energies of life may be consecrated to the service of an adorable Redeemer. It is to be moved by constraining love, to be persuaded by every argument of Divine condescension and entreaty, by the goodness which follows us every day. It is to leave all, and to suffer all, for the Lord whom we love. To *do* this, we must be capable of reflecting upon the subject, with a good degree of calmness and decision. We must be *satisfied* that it *is* our *choice*. And can we do this, whilst contending with the fears of death? whilst oppressed with the memories of a life, all spent in the neglect of CHRIST? whilst a guilty conscience, on one hand, chides us with its just rebukes, and on the other, we behold the great white throne of judgment, and the Book of life opened in the presence of Him, whose eye is as a flame of fire, and will scan every act, and every word, and every thought? Surely this is not the favored hour for the soul to *choose* whom it will serve! This is not the moment in which to hear "the still small voice" of the Spirit, with His mild entreaties,—His soothing

promises and blessed hopes. The mind is too disturbed for this. It is the hour when the Lord passes by the trembling sinner, in the "great strong wind, the earthquake and the fire" of approaching retribution, "the wrath of the Lamb." "Come *now*," says God, "and let us *reason* together,"—*now*, whilst you are *capable* of reasoning,—*now*, in the bloom of youth,—*now*, in the strength of your manhood. The "still small voice" of the Spirit reaches you from every portion of His glorious creation. In the means of grace, and the invitations of the gospel, the Spirit and the Bride say, Come!

Finished on Friday, Aug. 5, 1853.